13
MARCH 1988

NEW TIMES

A SOVIET WEEKLY
OF WORLD AFFAIRS

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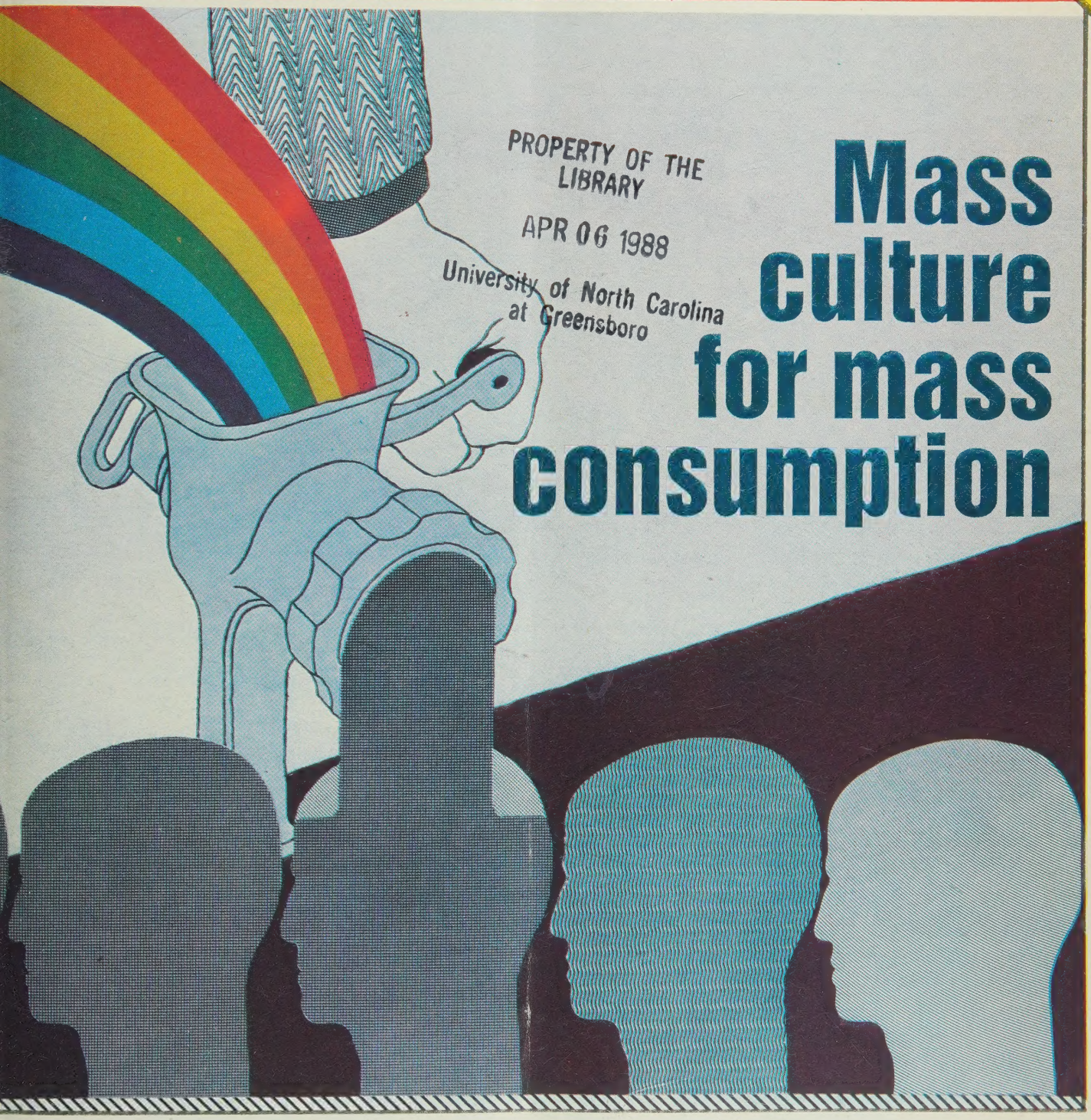

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NEW PERSPECTIVES

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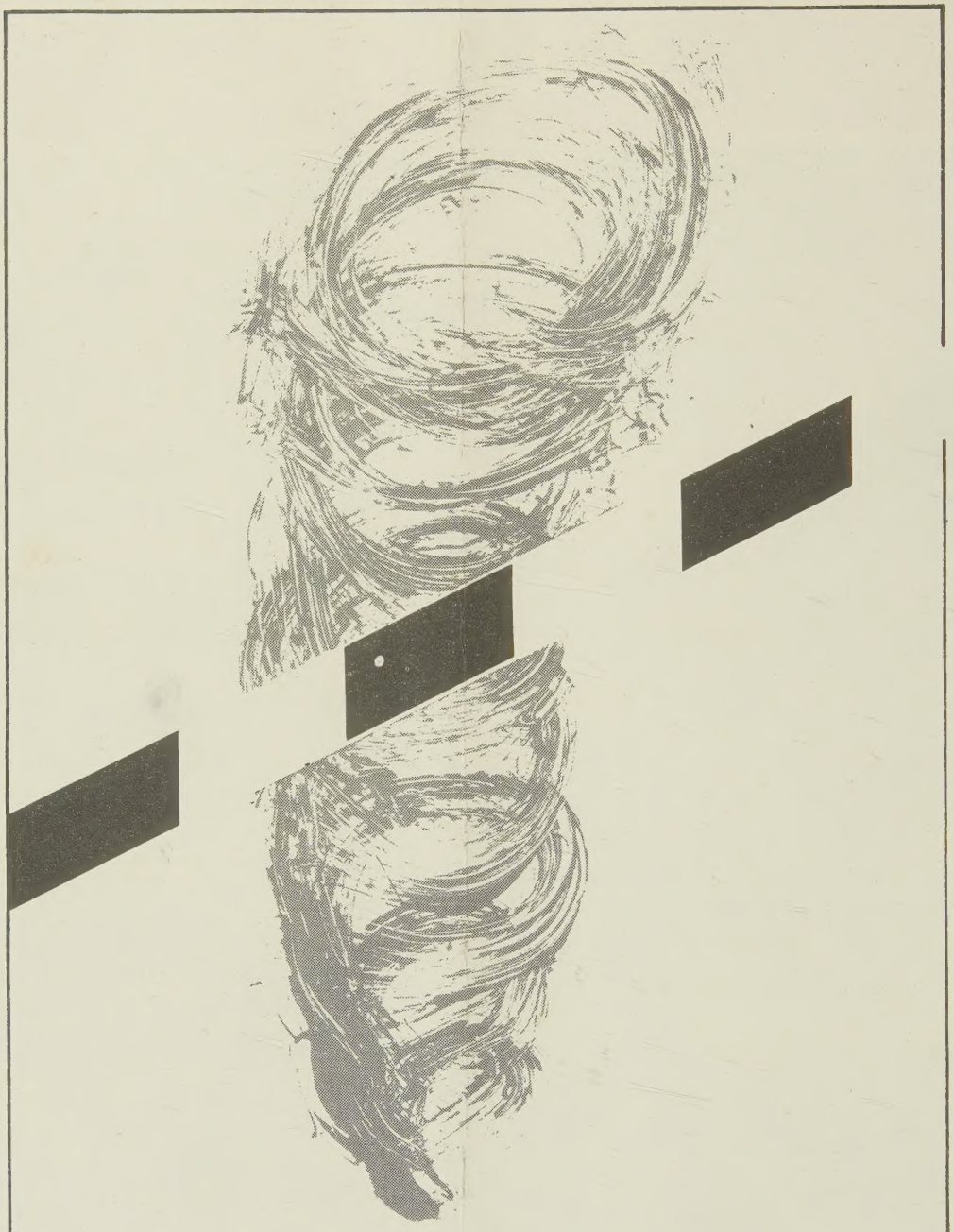

ECOLOGY

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The Mediterranean, which washes the shores of three parts of the world, is the arena of many local wars and territorial conflicts. It can and must become a sea of peace.

Mikhail Gorbachev's suggestions for the demilitarization of the Mediterranean, and a scientist's reflections on the issue, appear on pp. 12-13.

The results of General Secretary Gorbachev's visit to Yugoslavia are analyzed on pp. 5-6.

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OPINIONS

I welcome the talks now being conducted between the Soviet Union and the United States on a 50 per cent reduction of nuclear strategic weapons. Nevertheless, I have some misgivings about them. I think the Americans are again putting our country at a disadvantage by going ahead with their "star wars" project. The anti-missile shield may prove more effective against the missiles that remain.

The new Soviet proposals for a further reduction of strategic armaments must, in my opinion, deal with the Strategic Defence Initiative. Otherwise, despite our mutual efforts, our steps towards the strengthening of peace may prove fruitless.

ANATOLY AFANASYEV
Smolensk Region, U.S.S.R.

●

As the grandson of a judge, I want clarity on every point. Neither Doctor Abouchar, nor correspondent Gaillo, the Westerners who illegally penetrated into Afghanistan and were arrested and brought to trial there, acted within the limits of the criminal code, no matter how noble their aims might be from their point of view.

Any infringement of the law must be punished. I think it is the duty of every doctor and journalist worthy of his profession not to add fuel to the flames but to contribute to the peaceful settlement of disputes and the objective coverage of events in Afghanistan.

LOUIS FAURE-BRAC
Six-Fours-Les-Plages, France

●

It's good that your magazine carries letters from readers with different points of view. However, there is one thing that worries me. The authors of long articles and interviews dealing with domestic issues are mainly advocates of perestroika. I feel this does not reflect the real state of affairs in our society today. There are still a great many opponents of the democratic changes in our country. Perhaps New Times is making a mistake in not allowing the opponents of perestroika to express their views in its pages.

It could be an article with a comment by the editors, or a dialogue between two persons with different views, or anything else. In the end, it is not the form but the content that matters. We can talk about genuine glasnost and democracy only when a free discussion between people with different views is conducted in the press. In this, I think, lies the guarantee of our further progress.

ANTONINA FROLOVA
Krasnoyarsk, U.S.S.R.

MEMORY

In issue No. 51/87 I read a letter from a compatriot of mine, Hans Resch, entitled "The Truth about Gleiwitz." Perhaps what I want to tell you will also seem interesting to the readers.

I was 15 on September 1, 1939, when the German nazi army crossed the Polish border and the second world war began, but I remember everything clearly. A few days before the war started, we secondary school students, dressed in the brown shirts of the Hitlerjungend had been sent to local villages to hand out call-up papers. We had been duped by the slogans about our superiority over other nations so much that we could not understand why the fathers, mothers and wives of the draftees cried and would not let them go to "fulfil their duty to the Vaterland."

On the day we handed out call-up papers to draftees, we heard a broadcast in Polish over the Gleiwitz radio station, and the next morning we read in the papers about the "attack" by the Poles. Bells chimed, and lessons were cancelled. Then followed reports of our victories and new offensives. In 1942 I was myself called up, and very soon my enthusiasm evaporated.

I learned the truth about Gleiwitz only after the war, on returning from captivity. I was ashamed for my people and understood that it was necessary to do all in my power so that the horrors of war would never be repeated.

CARL-H. SCHOLZ
Leipzig, G.D.R.

RESONANCE

In issue No. 10/88 the magazine carried an interview with Victor Karpov, chief of the arms limitation and disarmament department at the Foreign Ministry. I found it very interesting and would like to express my views on this occasion.

The withdrawal of missile systems from the German Democratic Republic is, to my mind, a major landmark on the way to disarmament. The vast sums of money that were spent on the maintenance of the missiles and their crews are being released, and the problem now is how to spend them on civilian needs.

It is very important to dispel the myth about the immense superiority of the Warsaw Treaty in conventional armaments. Experts from different organizations, both Soviet and Western, should elaborate uniform criteria sufficient for an accurate assessment of the military potentials of both sides. If I am not mistaken, John Cross, deputy director of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, also spoke of this in the issue No. 5/88.

These criteria should include data about mobility, fire power, and so on. In this case we can rely on statistics, and the

GLASNOST FROM OUR MAILBAG

READERS' QUESTIONS

I am very interested in the history, economy and culture of Canada. But perhaps 80 per cent of my knowledge about that country I get from Radio Canada broadcasts in Russian. To my deep regret, the Soviet media pay very little attention to Canada, and if anything is written, it is mainly about that country's dependence on its southern neighbour, the United States. Why is perestroika so slow in reporting on world affairs? I would like to read more about Canadians, how they live and what they think about us.

IGOR STOLYAROV
Odessa, U.S.S.R.

●

I have subscribed to most of the Soviet newspapers and magazines appearing in English. Recently I read with great interest the articles by two American journalists who worked last year under a contract on one of these newspapers. Believing their unprejudiced reports, you also begin to have greater trust in this newspaper. Why not hold such an experiment at New Times? It would perhaps be interesting for Americans to learn what Soviet journalists invited to work for some time on one of our periodicals think about the United States.

PAUL HUDSON
Chicago, U.S.A.

picture will become clearer and broader. It will be ascertained, for instance, that Soviet tanks of 1960s models are below the criteria established for weapons of this type, and can therefore be scrapped. At the same time, the absence of aircraft carriers in the Warsaw Treaty will make it necessary for NATO to reduce the number of its fighters and bombers. I hope that the various reserve formations of both sides, arms depots, etc., will also be taken into account in assessing the balance of strength.

Given such criteria and the good will of politicians, it will be possible to remove the imbalance in armaments and reduce them to a level beneath which a war of aggression will be impossible.

V. CHEBUKIN
Kharkov Region, U.S.S.R.

The item by Alexei Dityakin published in issue No. 48/87 of the Russian-language edition greatly surprised me. Entitled "An Age-Old Craft," it describes a contest held among the blacksmiths who use old methods of artistic forging in their work. Why should we extoll methods that have obviously outlived their day? Apparently primitive workshops would be organized in almost all villages in order to preserve the "professional secrets" of, say, forging chains. It will cost the state a pretty penny. A modern automatic device can daily churn out lots of similar articles for the country.

Obsolete manufacturing systems are being radically changed in your country, and highly productive machines are being introduced. This is an imperative of the times. So is it necessary to divert people from their daily work to revive what has become obsolete both morally and economically?

GURGEN MINASYAN
Toronto, Canada

SUGGESTION

Information technology has recently been a much debated subject both in our country and the West. Discarding the extreme view that computer machines can solve many economic, social and even political problems, we should, in my opinion, adopt the experience of Western countries in the use of electronic computers in various spheres. This especially concerns the training of economics students and future managers. Suffice it to recall that, as the Americans assert, every student in the United States will own a personal computer by the nineties.

I suggest therefore that a national centre or club should be set up for the training of students who will be able not only to operate electronic computers but also to use them effectively in the economy. My suggestion may seem naive to some people. But I think it would be wrong to tackle this problem solely at research organizations, without involving students and other young people in the work.

YURI GUBSKY
Kiev, U.S.S.R.

ARTIST'S COMMENT

Drawing by Guro Varga (Yugoslavia)

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

One day at the beginning of 1955 I was sitting with an American friend in a small café in Paris. Soon we were joined by his father, then a State Department official. We got into conversation. I asked him, why didn't the American government leave Russia alone? Wasn't it risking a third, or perhaps the last, world war by goading the Soviet Union? For it was obvious even at that time that the Soviet Union wanted peace, needed to reconstruct, build up.

I remember his reply very well. "I agree, the Soviets won't attack us. But... we don't intend to, either. We'll just keep up the pressure. We are arming, they must arm too. We can afford it. But their national income is much smaller than ours, and the arming will therefore be ruinous for them. Their economy will collapse, and we can 'roll back' communism from Eastern Europe."

The State Department official turned out to be wrong, however. The Soviet Union wasn't ruined. Having realized the futility of its policy towards the Soviet Union, Washington agreed to sign the INF treaty and is negotiating a possible elimination of 50 per cent of strategic armaments. As for my friend's father, he understood even earlier that the U.S. government's position was wrong. He quit the State Department in protest against the military policy of President Johnson.

MAX WATTS
Annandale, Australia

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

PRIVATE OPINION

WILHELM KRISTIANS, Chairman, Deutsche Bank AG (F.R.G.)

I know from my business experience that summit meetings always inspire hope. Therefore the coming exchange of visits between Federal Chanbcellor Helmut Kohl of the F.R.G. and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of the CPSU Central Committee appears to be of extraordinary importance.

There is no doubt that the exchange will bring better understanding and more two-way contacts. I also hope that the Deutsche Bank and West German industry as a whole will have more opportunities for cooperation with Soviet firms. After all, it is easier to decide to invest in this or that enterprise when the political climate is favourable. I do not doubt the expediency of cooperation between West German and Soviet enterprises, although the creation of economic structures capable of standing competition on the world market is no easy matter. In the U.S.S.R., the past three years have seen economic reforms and re-evaluations of certain popular notions, which are still in progress. Although this process is an internal Soviet affair, I think, we should help carry it through, because our cooperation pursues strictly peaceful ends. West Germans have regarded Soviet missiles as "dangerous" and "threatening" for years, but if they could see these same missiles used for peaceful purposes such as satellite launchings, or witness a joint flight of a West German astronaut and his Soviet colleagues, they would change their minds.

VALERY SAIKIN, Chairman, Executive Committee, Moscow City Soviet

For me personally, the past week was highlighted by a trip to Kabul. My Afghan colleague and I signed an agreement there on close cooperation between our two capitals for the next three years. Today Soviet republics, regions and cities are establishing such direct contacts with provinces and cities of Afghanistan on an increasingly large scale. It was not our first agreement of this kind. What are we going to do - or rather go on doing - for Kabul? We shall render its municipal authorities assistance in designing, building and maintaining various installations; fully equip two polyclinics, an ambulance station and two secondary schools; and supply buiding equipment, household appliances and clothing. The first trainload of supplies has already left Moscow. Our Moscow organizations will establish direct links with 13 Kabul ones in various spheres of the municipal economy.

I was greatly impressed by my meetings with Kabul elders, artisans, businessmen, workers and clergymen.

Life is still hard in Kabul today. People there dream of the early peace which alone can enable both the capital and the nation at large to solve their pressing socio-economic problems.

DAVID KRIEGER, a politologist, president, U.S. Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

The highlight of the past few days? I took part in the discussions and seminars in Moscow to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the birth of Vladimir Vernadsky, the great Russian scientist, naturalist and thinker. It made a strong impression on me and, I think, on many of my colleagues.

At the beginning of this century he set out to prove, in scientific terms, that the world and knowledge are integral entities. He actually created a synthesis of sciences and revealed the relationship between man and the planet, between the animate and inanimate worlds. His theories on the noosphere are consonant with ideas that are just beginning to gain currency today. Vernadsky's ideas mean a great deal to me personally. They encourage us to seek ways of eliminating means of destruction - military and otherwise. I came to the conclusion long ago that a scientist should not be a mere instrument of someone's will, or obediently produce ideas to order. A scientist bears an enormous responsibility to the coming generations for his discoveries. This responsiblity is comparable, to a certain extent, with that of a physician to his patient: "Do no harm!" At the Moscow seminars I suggested a draft Hippocratic oath for scientists. I hope that some day everyone embarking on a scientific career will be obliged to administer such an oath to his fellow men.

For broader cooperation

From our own correspondent
VLADIMIR GRISHNIY,
GENNADY SYSOYEV

"Our dialogue has taken on to an entirely new dimension in the depth of the analysis made, the problems discussed, and the overall atmosphere," was how the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Mikhail Gorbachev summed up the results of his talks with the Yugoslav leadership.

This assessment is shared by both sides. It was not a series of monologues, but an extensive dialogue, noted the President of the Presidium of the CC of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Bosko Krunic, a dialogue in which views were exchanged, ideas put forward, and optimal solutions sought.

To that one could add that no issues were taboo in the discussions, nor did any question of mutual interest remain untouched on. The main thing demonstrated by the talks was a mutual desire to promote wider cooperation in all fields.

Soviet-Yugoslav relations arouse special interest largely because of the history of these relations. There have been difficult times, when unfounded accusations against Yugoslavia led to conflicts and the petering out of relations between the two socialist countries. Acrimony, mistrust and suspicion came easily, but were hard to get over.

The year 1948 served as a lesson in our relations. A bitter lesson of how disregard for the principles of independence could lead to a virtual breakdown of relations. In 1955-56 the appropriate conclusions were drawn from this lesson. The two countries were able to put aside their mutual sense of injury, normalize relations and move towards strengthening them.

Time has shown that the principles proclaimed in Belgrade in 1955 and in Moscow in 1956 were historically correct. That is why the two sides deemed it necessary to reaffirm these fundamental principles and underline their significance in the joint declaration adopted during Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Yugoslavia.

The declaration is a bilateral document, but its significance extends far beyond the framework of Soviet-Yugoslav relations and there can be no doubt of its importance for the socialist world as a whole. Especially today when socialism is in the midst of reconstruction and reforms.

The exchange of views on ways of socialist construction figured prominently in the talks between the Soviet Communist Party leader and the Yugoslav leaders. That in itself is noteworthy, as in the past this was a subject of disputes and serious differences of opinion.

No one way only

A dogmatic approach to one's own experience (although the dialectics of the general laws and the specific features did not seem to be questioned) led to the Soviet way being interpreted as the only possible one and any deviation from it being regarded with wariness and suspicion. That, as we see it, was the main reason why stereotyped attitudes to Yugoslavia's way of building socialism survived for so long.

No one can claim to have a monopoly on the interpretation of a concept, just as no one has the right to impose his own

views of social development on others. Those principles form the backbone of the Soviet-Yugoslav declaration. Consequently, no one's experience of building socialism can be regarded as the exclusive model for all, so the only right way is through each country charting its own course and exchanges of experience. "The strength of socialism lies in its versatility and wealth of international experience," Mikhail Gorbachev said, addressing the Yugoslav Federal Assembly. "That is why we so highly prize the organic combination of the independence of each party and country with respect for mutual interests and each other's views and experience, and regard this as a sign of maturity in relations between socialist countries." The separate experience of each socialist country enriches the theory of socialism as a whole. And the wider the spectrum, the more clearly and fully the overall picture of socialism is seen.

Despite all the individual features of the processes at work in our two countries today, they have a great deal in common: the development of socialist democracy, the perfecting of the system of self-government, economic reforms, and greater attention to ethnic problems. In resolving these problems much depends on the Communist Party and its political line. That explains why the question of the role of the Party was one of the key issues in the Soviet-Yugoslav talks, especially with regard to what could be done to strengthen this role without allowing administrative methods to creep in, and without taking on the functions of state and economic bodies.

The two sides called for increased cooperation between the Soviet Communist Party and the Yugoslav Communist League, so that dialogue between them should not be mere form, but always fresh and alive. Next in line therefore is wider cooperation between Party and scientific institutions, working together on theoretical problems and summing up all experience.

Putting ideas into practice

In the mechanism of bilateral cooperation, all systems must operate smoothly. When one link changes its beat, the entire mechanism is affected. For a long time economic ties were the field in which Soviet-Yugoslav relations functioned best. There seemed to be no cause for concern. But when the situation on the world market changed, the alarm began to sound. The sharp drop in oil prices revealed a number of shortcomings in our economic ties, their one-sidedness, and excessive dependence on traditional trade.

So the Belgrade talks considered the problem of moving over to more mature forms of economic relations, making optimal use of each side's stronger points. This includes wider specialization and production cooperation, direct links between enterprises, the setting up of mixed-capital firms, and joint ventures on the markets of third countries.

Among the documents signed during the visit are two agreements. One deals with the mutual recognition of diplomas and degrees issued by the other country, and the second provides for the opening of a Yugoslav Information and Cultural Centre in Moscow. The first will remedy the situation in which a University or college diploma issued in one country was not recognized as the equivalent of one issued in the other. This agreement will undoubtedly clear the way for broader educational and scientific exchanges between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

A Soviet Cultural Centre has been functioning in Belgrade for several years. A number of socialist countries have lately opened Information and Cultural Centres in Moscow. Now it is Yugoslavia's turn. This will make Soviet-Yugoslav contacts broader and more democratic.

The times we live in call for the democratization of relations between states. Addressing the Federal Assembly, Mikhail Gorbachev underlined that "only nations that have joined forces to save the world can prevent the nuclear sword from falling on us." Democratization of international relations presupposes the recognition of the right of each nation to choose its own course and determine its own future. The voices of all nations - big and small - should be heard in the world community. It is essential that all countries should be involved in the settlement of the most important problems of our times. This also applies to the public, which refuses to remain on the sidelines in world affairs and is generating its own ideas and putting forward constructive initiatives.

The talks in Yugoslavia showed that in internatioinal affairs, too, there exist the prerequisites for strengthening cooperation between our two countries.

Mikhail Gorbachev paid high tribute to the role of the non-aligned countries in restructuring international relations. He backed the programme of measures adopted at the Brijoni meeting of the Mediterranean non-aligned countries, and for his part put forward in Belgrade new initiatives that could widen the basis for a productive dialogue on the problems of the region.

The Soviet Union also favours wider cooperation in the Balkans and is prepared to give all the necessary guarantees should it be decided to set up a zone free from nuclear and chemical weapons in the area.

The visit is over. Now it is time to put the agreements into practice. That will require a great deal of efforts from both sides. ■

PRIVATE OPINION

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

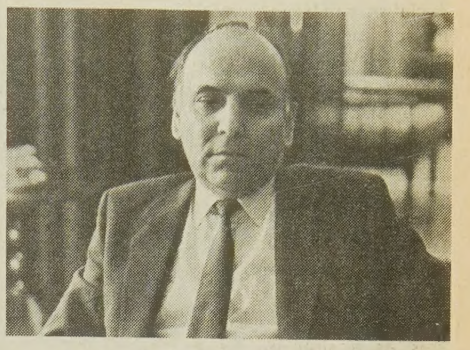
TIHOMIR ILIEVSKY deputy Federal Secretary for Information, Yugoslavia.

"Mikhail Gorbachev's Five Days in Yugoslavia" unquestionably stand out among other events in the life of our country and on the world scene.

Yugoslav-Soviet relations have a long tradition. Despite their vicissitudes, and occasional periods of stagnation, our mutually advantageous ties are developing successfully. The wide coverage given to the visit both in the Yugoslav and foreign mass media undoubtedly confirms its international significance. This also applies to the initiatives put forward by Comrade Gorbachev in his address to the Yugoslav Federal Assembly. Directness, openness and mutual respect were once again reaffirmed as distinctive features of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The Declaration signed during the visit gives a new and powerful impulse to the basic principles of these relations contained in the Belgrade and Moscow Declarations of 1955-1956.

On the whole M.S.Gorbachev's visit to Yugoslavia can be said to open up a new and significant page in the annals of our cooperation. I can suggest that the perestroika under way in Soviet society could introduce a new, fresh and mutually useful content to these relations.

My country needs peace and democracy



Below Mohammad Bashir Baghlani, Afghanistan's Minister of Justice, is interviewed by Dmitry Zgersky for New Times.

Comrade Baghlani, you are one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Organization of the Working People of Afghanistan (ROWPA) which has formed a bloc with the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Can you tell us briefly about your organization? What prompted your decision to form a bloc with the PDPA?

Our Revolutionary Organization of the Working People of Afghanistan was formed back in 1968. Its founder was Muhammed Takhir Badahshi who, incidentally, took part in the first congress of the PDPA. At that time the authorities and the ruling circles in general took a hostile attitude to left-wing ideas, so the ROWPA was persecuted and had to operate illegally.

After April 1978, we hoped that all the left-wing forces in our country would be able to unite and bring the revolution to its conclusion. Unfortunately, after a short while repression was resumed, and ROWPA was not spared either. During the rule of Hafisullah Amin, about 3,000 of our members, among them Muhammed Takhir Badahshi, died in prison. But in spite of heavy losses, our organization continued to be active.

ROWPA could not operate legally because the Basic Principles of the D.R.A. adopted in 1980 as an interim constitution, provided for a one-party system in the country, that party being the PDPA. Even so, we worked openly among the population, mainly in the northern areas, to explain the tasks of the revolution and we formed armed units to defend ourselves against counterrevolution.

The Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan adopted by the Loya Jirgah (the National Assembly) in November 1987 allows the setting up and existence of various political parties and organizations. Naturally, in the new situation ROWPA has come out into the open.

Now about our alliance with the PDPA. We are convinced that it is necessary to unite the left and all other patriotic forces if we are to achieve progressive goals. Moreover, Afghanistan is now living in difficult conditions, with an undeclared war being waged against it. Because we have common goals with the PDPA, ROWPA has signed a protocol on cooperation with it. Each party remains independent. The next step was the creation of a left-wing democratic bloc, including ROWPA, the PDPA and the recently founded small Organization of the Working People of Afghanistan.

We do not have, and never have had, fundamental ideological differences with the PDPA. True, at one time we diverged over the tactics of the struggle against a regime under which one nationality enjoyed special privileges and dominated over others. We demanded guarantees of economic, political and cultural rights for all nationalities. We also insisted on the creation of national administrative entities within Afghanistan on the basis of historical, territorial and linguistic community.

A question to you now as Minister of Justice. How is the process of democratization developing in Afghan society? How is it reflected in the most recent legislation, the Constitution? In the Law on Labour?

They include many new democratic provisions. I have already mentioned the Constitution, which proclaims a multiparty system on condition that the activity of these parties does not contradict other constitutional norms. This, of course, is a serious democratizing measure.

Article 13 of the Constitution reads, for the first time, that Afghanistan is a multinational state. Equality of political, economic, social and cultural rights for all nationalities has been proclaimed. If you think about it, this means that there are still inequalities in the country. Article 13 establishes new, and I stress this, new legislative norms aimed at achieving equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their nationality.

In general, the Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan now reflects the main provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They include the freedom and inviolability of the individual, the presumption of innocence, privacy of correspondence and domicile, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of religion, and so on.

Many favourable changes have been introduced in the Law on Labour. It guarantees the right to work, fair pay at all enterprises, including those owned by private individuals, the right to leisure, paid maternity leave for women, and many other things. I would like to stress in particular that the implementation of these laws will depend to a great extent on the establishment of peace and calm in our country and on the development of the national economy.

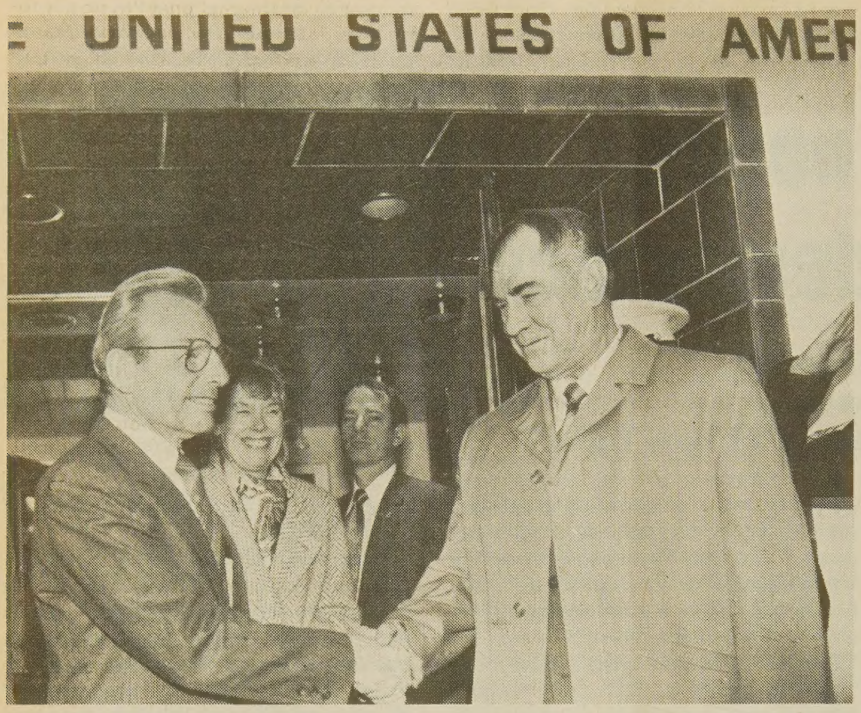
On the whole, the new laws chart the road for genuine democratization.

What are the most urgent tasks facing the country at the present stage?

The main task today is to put an end to fratricide and bloodshed, and to stop the war. You know what efforts the Afghan side is exerting towards that end. What is needed is genuine national reconciliation, political dialogue and mutual compromise. This makes democratization extremely important, so that all political organizations and each individual can express their views without fear. On this basis it will be possible to create a coalition government in which all the country's political forces will play an active part and be proportionally represented. This will of course include those now in opposition. We should provide measures in advance against the bureaucratization of power. The mass media should offer universal access for the democratic expression of views and opinions.

In short, my country needs peace and democracy.

■



Frank Carlucci and Dmitry Yazov before their meeting at the U.S. embassy.
TASS photo

The first ever in postwar years

Meeting between Dmitry Yazov and Frank Carlucci

The Bern meeting between the Soviet and U.S. defence ministers is certainly an outstanding event in the dialogue on security, disarmament and the stabilization of bilateral relations that has recently been promoted between the two countries in various forms.

For the first time in postwar history the Soviet and American leaders responsible for the security of their countries have sat face to face at the negotiating table. They discussed military aspects of the key political issues involved in removing the threat of war, especially nuclear war.

Such a talk would have been inconceivable two years ago. A solid political foundation for the Bern meeting was laid by the Geneva, Reykjavik and Washington summits, and the concrete results of these high-level talks: the INF treaty, the fundamental decisions on strategic offensive weapons and compliance with the ABM treaty, and the preparations for talks on conventional arms in Europe, ending nuclear testing, and the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons.

This range of problems, which faces not just the Soviet Union and the United States but the whole of the world community is linked in one way or another with the military doctrines of states, and the ideological basis of military policy that underlies the present structures of armed forces and the directions of their further growth.

In this sense, military doctrine could either give birth to another nuclear monster in, say, the form of a directed-energy weapon, or lead to the elaboration of non-nuclear, non-offensive defence strategies, that is, strategies most suitable to the comprehensive security system.

Therefore,it is no accident that **character of the Soviet and U.S. military doctrines was a major item on the agenda at the Bern talks.** Interesting and useful though it was, the talk on this subject proved unable to lead immediately to any mutual recommendations on changes to be made in military doctrines so that they do not increase military confrontation but, on the contrary, ensure greater predictability and stability in the military equilibrium between the Soviet Union and the United States. Time, and a permanently operating and expanding mechanism of meetings between military experts on both sides are necessary for this purpose.

The Bern meeting of the U.S. and Soviet defence ministers has brought such a mechanism into action. A programme worked out there envisages the profound analysis and mutual discussion and solution of military-political and military-technical issues connected with disarmament and security. Further steps are planned for the immediate future.

First, to hold consultations for a deeper understanding of the content and direction of the Soviet and U.S. military doctrines, and to consider the possibility of **exchanging data on the armed forces of the United States and the Soviet Union** and, after consultations with their allies, **on the armed forces of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty.**

Such an exchange of data would also help start talks on the reduction of armed forces and conventional arms in Europe on the basis of the mandate that is now being elaborated at the Vienna follow-up meeting to the Helsinki conference.

Second, to study ways of monitoring sea-launched nuclear cruise missiles, and consider proposals to hold an early joint experiment to detect the presence of nuclear weapons on board ships.

If the effectiveness of such control were proven, it would help establish whether the number of sea-launched cruise missiles carried by the navies of the two countries is within the limits on their strategic arsenals, which are now being defined at the nuclear and space arms talks in Geneva.

Third, to carry on the policy of improving mutual understanding and strengthening confidence in the military

field by expanding contacts and ties between the armed forces of the Soviet Union and the United States.

The defence ministers have instructed the chiefs of staff of the armed forces of their countries, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev and Admiral William Crowe, to work out programmes in this field.

Fourth, to draw up principles and institute an appropriate forum for bilateral consultations on the military activity of the Soviet Union and the United States with a view to preventing incidents between their armed forces.

In other words, efforts should be made to avoid violations of the Soviet-American agreements on the prevention of incidents on the open sea and in the air space over it (1972) and on military communication missions (1947).

The Soviet-American dialogue in the military sphere has thus reached a new level. It should play an important role in constructive cooperation for the sake of universal security. Soviet-American relations in the military field can and should develop, through dialogue, from confrontation to constructive cooperation.

Major General GELY BATENIN,
Cand. Sc. (Milit.)

On-the-spot report from Bern

The meetings took place in the Soviet and U.S. embassies. In the Soviet embassy, I managed to glimpse into the room prepared for the talks. I saw a long rectangular table with seven chairs on either side - the number of members of the Soviet and U.S. delegations. Opposite the table, near the wall, there were the American and Soviet flags. A diplomat on duty was smoothing out creases in the U.S. flag with its bronze eagle on top of the staff.

A big crowd of TV correspondents and photographers had gathered in the courtyard. The American delegation was escorted by cars belonging to the Swiss security service. But Frank Carlucci did not arrive with it. A member of the protocol department exlained that the Defence Secretary would be there seven minutes later. Indeed, exactly seven minutes later an armoured black limousine drove without slowing down into the embassy courtyard. Carlucci had been advised by the Bern authorities to use this car, who said that otherwise they would be unable to guarantee his security.

Carlucci is an elderly, lean man of medium height and stern appearance with smoothly combed greying hair. He wears thick glasses with fine dark rims. The U.S. delegation includes three high-ranking officers in military uniform - Vice-Admiral Jonathan Howe, assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Major-General Gordon Fornell, a senior military assistant to the Defence Secretary, and Brigadier-General Ervin Rokke, defence attaché at the U.S. embassy in Moscow. All our delegates wore civilian clothes.

The talks were held behind closed doors, and the newsmen were therefore asked to go away.

On the evening of March 16, in the Soviet embassy, Dmitry Yazov received a delegation from the Swiss national association of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Martin Fossler, president of the association, told the minister of the goals, tasks and content of the seven-year-old movement, and handed him a letter of greeting from American Professor Bernard Lown, one of the movement's co-founders.

The Swiss physicians stressed that those nuclear weapons intended primarily for annihilation of the civilian population must be destroyed completely.

"At the meeting with Frank Carlucci we discussed how to get rid of these weapons, but today the Soviet Union and the United States are not the only countries to possess them," Dmitry Yazov noted. "For me personally, war and the human suffering it brings are not an abstraction. I fought in the Second World War and was in the siege of Leningrad, where people died of wounds and hunger....But it's one thing for me to say that nuclear weapons are dangerous, and another thing for you to say it. People have more trust in physicians. They turn to them for help at the most difficult times."

The Swiss physicians presented the minister with Max Frisch's book inscribed by the author: "To Dmitry Yazov, Defence Minister of the U.S.S.R. I believe that the Soviet Union is fighting for peace. Max Frisch."

Two press conferences were held after the final meeting between the American and Soviet ministers.

Speaking from the rostrum of the conference hall in the modern Belvue hotel at which the U.S. delegation was staying, Frank Carlucci stressed that his dialogue with minister Yazov had taken place in a cordial and businesslike atmosphere. He enumerated all the issues discussed at the meeting, undoubtedly known to our readers from press reports, and did not conceal that the sides held divergent views on many of them. At the same time, the Defence Secretary expressed confidence that the Bern meeting was the beginning of a useful and necessary dialogue which must be continued. He reminded those present of the forthcoming meeting in Washington between Marshal Akhromeyev and Admiral Growe.

"We did not strive for confrontation and stated our views. Our discussions with Frank Carlucci were outspoken and useful, and they were held in a spirit of great respect," Dmitry Yazov said at a press conference arranged with the help of the Swiss authorities in the officers' lecture-hall on the grounds of a cantonment in Bern. "I return to Moscow with a sense of having done my duty."

YURI KOSINSKY

Bern

Execution deferred, but...

"They can kill my body, but not my spirit," said Reid Mokoena, a young black South African, in his death cell a few days before he and five other convicts were to have been hanged...

In September 1984, the word Sharpeville reappeared on the front pages of many newspapers across the world. This Johannesburg suburb first made headlines in March 1960, when South African racists ruthlessly suppressed protests there. At the time police opened fire point-blank on a peaceful demonstration by black citizens against the inhuman apartheid regime.

Twenty-four years later, riot police were called in again to "pacify" the residents of African settlements (black ghettos, in fact) driven to despair by exorbitant rents. In Sharpeville, troops were ordered to destroy any "live target" in order to "prevent further aggravation of the situation." The authorities suffered a setback, however. After the first shots had been fired,the demonstrators rigged up barricades and beat back the security forces' attacks for hours by throwing stones and home-made grenades. Dozens of people died in the clashes, and many were seriously injured.

The dead included Kuzwayo Dlamini, the black mayor of Sharpeville. Police arrested eight persons on suspicion of murdering him.

The investigation farce dragged on for months. There was no direct evidence, and the testimony given in court was controversial and inconvincing. The name of the main witness for the prosecution was kept secret as the authorities feared for the life of their informer, who had given what was obviously false evidence. Not a single detainee pleaded guilty. It was never proved at the trial that the official's murder was premeditated or, for that matter, that the defendants had anything at all to do with Dlamini's death. The counsel for the defense furnished ample proof of their innocence. However, this did not embarrass South African justice in the least. The Sharpeville Six - Theresa Ramashamola, Oupa Diniso, Mojalefa Sefatsa, Reid Mokoena, Francis Mokhesi and Duma Khumalo - were sentenced to death by hanging, and two more to long terms in jail.

In December 1987, the Supreme Court of South Africa noted the lack of evidence condemning the Six, but endorsed all the death sentences notwithstanding.

In fact, the Six had been condemned to death for their participation in a protest action. White Judge W. J. Human said he had sentenced the six Africans to death for "belonging to the mass of people involved in the disturbances." The execution was to have taken place on March 18, 1988.

The verdict roused a storm of protest the world over. The U.N. Security Council demanded that it be repealed. While in Yugoslavia, Mikhail Gorbachev called on the South African authorities to think better of it and to stay the hangmen's hand. U.S. President Reagan appealed to Pieter Botha to pardon the Sharpeville Six. The British Judge Geoffrey Bindman, a member of the International Commission of Jurists, called the verdict an "unspeakable act of injustice."

On March 17, on the eve of the day for which the execution had been scheduled, the lawyers of the Six made another attempt to save their innocent clients. They had an emergency session of the South African supreme court convened and submitted to it fresh evidence of the trial having been a racist frame-up and of gross

BRITAIN

Ulster: a spiral of violence

As another police victim's coffin was being lowered into the grave at the Milltown Cemetery, Belfast, strange sounds were heard...

Nobody paid any attention to them at first. Then came heart-rending screams, and many of the mourners faltered and fell down. A man in jeans had detached himself from a huge crowd of 10,000 or so. He fired random shots and threw fragmentation grenades from time to time. It was the grenades exploding that sounded like harmless flaps. The outrage left three dead and 68 wounded.

The following day I watched a session of parliament in progress from the strangers' gallery. The situation in Ulster was on the agenda, among other items. Tom King, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, called for an end to th spiral of violence, retaliato action and more violenc Other MPs also condemned th tactics. Many spoke wi profound emotion. The discu sion at the Commons in Londo coincided with another funer in Belfast: 5,000 went to th cemetery to pay their la

pressure having been brought on witnesses for the prosecution. According to lawyer Denis Kuny, Joseph Manete, the chief witness for the prosecution, had confessed that all his evidence was false. "I was beaten and abused into giving it," he said. The Supreme Court deferred the execution for a month and ordered a more thorough investigation of the case.

And so the execution has been put off for a month - a mere month. But justice has not yet triumphed. It will be remembered that 164 persons were hanged in South Africa in 1987, and 267 more await the same fate.

ALEXEI MAKOVSKY

Six death sell inmates. Top row, left to right: Theresa Ramashamola, Mojalefa Sefatsa, Oupa Diniso; bottom row: Reid Mokoena, Duma Khumalo, Francis Mokhesi.

Save the Sharpeville Six

A New Times correspondent asked Simon Sipho Makana, member of the Executive Committee of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), to comment on events in South Africa.

New Times. Are these six young people from Sharpeville members of the ANC?

S.S. Makana. That I don't know. As a rule members of the ANC have to work underground. Membership of the ANC in South Africa means risking your life hourly. We try to protect our forces. The six people in question were sentenced to death in South Africa not as members of the outlawed ANC but for taking part in protest demonstration.

N.T. How do you explain the decision to postpone the execution for a month?

S.S.M. I believe this to be convincing proof of the weakness of apartheid, which has retreated before the unanimous protest of the world community and the forces of democracy in South Africa. The postponement of the execution by one month is, of course, only a small achievement. It can and must be followed up. The anti-apartheid movement is spreading worldwide, and the international influence of the ANC is growing. In South Africa, dissent with regard to the country's future is increasing amongst the white minority. Even factory owners are dissatisfied with Botha's policy, as they haven't enough skilled black workers. The ground is falling away from under those reactionary Afrikaners who are convinced that they are divinely called to rule in the country.

N.T. Isn't that why the authorities are having recourse to ferocious methods to suppress the anti-apartheid movement?

S.S.M. I think so. The Pretoria government has recently banned activity of almost all opposition organizations that come out against the policy of racial segregation. Repression against all democratic forces in the country is getting tougher.

Hundreds of innocent Africans are sentenced to death annually. Apartheid is trying to intimidate our people. But for all that the ranks of fighters against the apartheid regime continue to grow.

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espects to Kevin McCracken, 32, shot dead by an army patrol n front of his own house ecently. On Saturday, one of he three killed at the cemetery vas buried. Incidentally, his nurderer was arrested. He urned out to be a member of an extremist Protestant organizaion. Then another tragedy truck. A car rushed past the uneral procession several times to and fro. When there was n attempt to stop it, a shot was eard from inside. The enraged crowd closed in on the car, ulled two terrorists out despite their armed resistance, beat them up and took them away in another car. Shortly afterwards, two corpses were found nearby...

The new outburst of violence brought numerous comments the authors of which centred on the religious strife between Protestants and Catholics - as did the recent parliamentary debates. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The roots of the problem lie in London's imperial policy towards Ireland.

Protestants retain key positions in the political-economic sphere. The inevitable fierce outbursts of protest are violently suppressed: Ulster police have been reinforced by a British Army expeditionary force. Here are some grim statistics: intercommunal clashes, police and army actions claimed almost 100 lives last year, the last 15 years' total casualty figure being over 2,600 dead and almost 30,000 wounded.

Nevertheless, the Tory government is in no hurry to find a constructive solution to this acute socio-political problem. All it does is tighten the screws. Douglas Hurd, the British Home Secretary, announced plans for making the anti-terrorist law permament. Enacted in 1974, it is supposed to neutralize the vigorous efforts by Catholics and civil rights activists. Previously, the law had to be extended every six months and revised every five years. All the indications are, however, that London's repressive policy is not yet subject to revision.

VLADIMIR ZHITOMIRSKY
our special correspondent
London-Belfast

The global threat of local wars

LEONID MEDVEDKO, D. Sc. (Hist.)

The Mediterranean nations ought really to feel as if they were on board a blazing ship, one chockfull of weapons and explosives, and beset from every side with the dangerous underwater reefs of global, regional, human, national, religious and social differences. The crew are confused: should they put the fire out and patch up the hole in the side? Or would it be better to jettison their dangerous cargo at once?

Since the end of the war, the Mediterranean has found itself enclosed not only by the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, and the three worlds of the capitalist, socialist and developing countries, but by a ring of smouldering old wars and conflicts, as well as of new wars and conflicts that have since flared up. In short, it has become a symbol of all of today's world, a world that is dynamic and many-faceted, shot through with acute contradictions, a world where unprecedented opportunities for progress exist alongside sprawling "seas of tension."

Meanwhile, the navies furrowing the waters of the Mediterranean add fuel to, rather than put out, the fires blazing along its shores. The American bases and other foreign military presences in regions of unsettled conflicts are even less reliable as "fire fighters." Succumbing to the inertia of cold-war days, the West still blames the Soviet Union – who else? – as being primarily responsible for these conflicts.

Let us instead look at the map. If we indicate the U.S. military bases ranged along the Mediterranean's perimeter with stars, we find that there are more of them than there are on the Stars and Stripes. On the other hand, there is not a single Soviet base along the Mediterranean littoral, and there are no Soviet troops anywhere near any of the Mediterranean flashpoints.

That certainly cannot be said of the American Rapid Deployment Force or the so-called "multinational" interventionist, if not occupationist, troops of the U.S.'s strategic allies, of whom there are more than enough on the shores of both Europe and Africa, let alone the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

What is particularly dangerous is that their number is increasing at the pivots of regional conflicts, be it Cyprus, Lebanon, Chad or the Persian Gulf zone, while in West Bank Jordan, the occupation forces are already carrying out a punitive mission.

Further, the likely possession of nuclear weapons by such "uncontrollable allies" of Washington as Israel and Pakistan only increases the danger of regional conflicts escalating into global catastrophe.

The foreign troops or foreign military bases in the Mediterranean area are there on different pretexts – most often trotted out supposedly to "ensure security," as in the Persian Gulf zone, to protect the "vital interests" of the U.S. and NATO, as in Morocco, Turkey and Cyprus, or, finally, to discharge a "peace-making" mission, as in Lebanon, the Sinai Peninsula and Chad. However, this is far from serving to reduce tensions.

I feel Le Monde Diplomatique was right to illustrate General Georges Bouis' article "New Threats in the Mediterranean" with a colourful packed chart using large arrows to indicate the involvement of the great powers – the Soviet Union, the United States and France – not only in conflicts confined to the Mediterranean as such, but also in the neighbouring areas of the Persian Gulf zone and Afghanistan. In these areas the political, economic and military interests not only of the great powers, but also of the Mediterranean states themselves and of their neighbours are intertwined. The two French scholars, Claude Nigoul and Maurice Torrelli, who have written a comprehensive survey entitled "The Threats in the Mediterranean" for the Paris Centre of National Defence Studies, regard as the basic threat the Mediterranean's excessive "strategic vulnerability" from both the geographical and purely military angles. Here they stress NATO's "strategic vulnerability" if not weakness in the area. Yet is this really the case? Let us put the matter bluntly and ask where these threats are coming from and who threatens whom in the Mediterranean.

As a rule, Western researchers approach problems of security, whether in

the Mediterranean or the Persian Gulf zone, from the angle of the likelihood of changes of alignment among the forces that are present or that react there, and not from the angle of balancing the interests of the states along the littoral and their neighbours. I think this kind of "logic" serves – more often than not – to support the objective of fomenting conflicts, or at leat of keeping them going, rather than settling them.

In the upshot, what we see in the Mediterranean is a paradox identical to that in the Persian Gulf. The more military forces are there, the harder it becomes to settle conflicts and the greater is the danger to peace and security, regionally or globally. Conflicts stimulate military buildup and this in turn increases tension. In this way, within the worldwide vicious circle of nuclear deterrence the vicious circles of regional conflicts are spreading out concentrically. How are we to break through these accursed vicious circles?

Regional conflicts are, of course, more than simply the result of "imperialist machinations." They flare up locally as a consequence of internal and regional contradictions. Such conflicts are generated either by a colonialist heritage, new social processes, relapses into a predatory policy, or by all three together.

The difficulty of settling conflicts today is due in no small measure to the tenacity with which the stereotypes of the old way of thinking hang on. It is these stereotypes that nourish U.S. hegemonistic doctrines, Israel's schemes for aggrandizement and the nationalist ambitions of the various parties to internecine conflicts.

It appears to me that the imperatives of the new political thinking have so far made better headway globally than regionally. This apparently derives from the delusion that there is no need for haste in coping with regional crises and other explosive issues, so many of which have accumulated in the Middle East and in the neighbouring Mediterranean and Persian Gulf zones. It is alleged that these "little" wars do not add up to a big threat, and that they are even advantageous for certain circles, especially militaristic ones. These are dangerous delusions. Whether it is a question of global issues or the settlement of regional conflicts, it is also essential to revise the old scale of values. This refers particularly to recognition of the priority attaching to human survival as the basic issue of today taking precedence over all other maters, not only social and group interests, but obviously national and religious interests as well.

The earth's flashpoints...How are we to extricate ourselves from the maze of problems? How are we to disentangle the numerous conflicts before they are caught up in one fatal Gordian Knot? After all, this knot may at any moment tighten into a deadly noose around humanity's neck. Any attempt to cut through it with the nuclear sword would be suicidal. It is imperative for us to start untying these knots, while there is still time. But how? One after the other? And where is the link by pulling at which we will extricate the entire chain?

It is clear today that it is better to look for ways and means of settling regional conflicts by balancing interests rather than by engaging in "trials" of strength.

Currently favourable trends are at work both inside parties directly involved in the conflicts as well as in the processes dominating in international relations. These opportunities must not be missed, inasmuch as there is a clear connection between the settlement of regional conflicts and the in-depth processes at work in the modern interrelated world.

The situation itself suggests that what it is imperative to do to resolve the issue is to demilitarize the Mediterranean.

To improve the "ecological environment" here we must remove the "catalyst" of conflict, i.e., direct foreign military presences. Their explosiveness must be neutralized by freeing the danger areas of nuclear fuses. Hence the implementation of the INF treaty will undoubtedly contribute signally to a healthier "political ecology" globally and regionally.

Efforts to secure national and international reconciliation have been taken before in the Middle East, Northern and Central Africa, and the Persian Gulf zone, but were unsuccessful. Is their failure to be blamed on the fact that these efforts were undertaken in the context of foreign interference by means of continued direct military presence if not armed intervention? The example of Afghanistan shows along which lines settlement of conflicts should be sought in other of the earth's flashpoints, especially in the Mediterranean. The withdrawal of foreign troops from hotbeds of tension would be an effective panacea in alleviating conflicts.

Why shouldn't the U.S. and its NATO allies pledge to refrain from direct military presence in regions beset by crises and conflict? Other countries whose troops are present on foreign territories within the zones of unresolved conflicts could assume similar pledges.

The Mediterranean nations are entitled to choose any course they please towards social progress. That is their sovereign right. However, common principles should underlie their security. These common principles are: renunciation of interference in the internal affairs of other states and ridding policy not only of ideological intolerance, but also of "national egoism" and every expression of ethnic or religious chauvinism.

The new Soviet initiatives to demilitarize the Mediterranean put forward by Mikhail Gorbachev in Belgrade furnish a sound basis for progress in this direction. Yet not only the great powers, but also all the other states must pledge not to use force or resort to threats, and to renounce every kind of military demonstration.

The time is ripe for an intensive quest for optimal solutions. The Soviet Union has suggested a conference of representatives of the Mediterranean states and other parties concerned as a forum at which such solutions could be discussed. ■

Mikhail Gorbachev in Belgrade:

NEW PROPOSALS ON THE MEDITERRANEAN

One. Reaffirming our preparedness to withdraw the navies of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. from the Mediterranean, we propose not to put this off indefinitely and, as a first step, to limit, as early as July 1 of this year, the number of ships and the potential of the naval forces of the two countries in the region, and subsequently to institute ceilings for them.

Two. Pending agreed general measures of confidence in the spirit of the Stockholm accords, the Soviet Union and the U.S.A. should notify each other and all Mediterranean countries in advance of the movements of warships and of military exercises and invite observers to them.

Three. For our part we will give every support to the elaboration by the Mediterranean countries and the other states concerned of the principles and methods for ensuring the safety of lanes of intensive shipping, especially in international straits.

(From the speech at the Yugoslav Skupshtina on March 16, 1988)

THE TANKER WAR

From our special correspondent

TIMUR GAIDAR

Kuwait's northern port, which handles dry-cargo ships, is vast and empty except for a few vessels berthed at long concrete wharves. Tall gantry cranes have come to a standstill. After the Iran-Iraq war spread to the Persian Gulf, the port's freight turnover decreased markedly. Once a popular transshipment point (for transit cargoes), it is now all but deserted. Nobody wants to take risks.

Some of the ships have strips of paper glued crosswise to the glasspanes of the square portholes of their superstructures, and sandbags piled high on the edges of the decks.

What happened to the Ivan Karateyev

The Soviet dry-cargo ship Ivan Karateyev cast off on a clear sunny morning. Tugs pulled up alongside, and a black-bearded pilot climbed aboard. "Let go aft!"

I had spent a few days in Kuwait waiting for that moment and now, as we edged along the red- and green-buoyed fairway, I looked at the city with a new interest as it glided past. The cityscape took on a new quality when viewed from the sea. The business quarter appeared as a cluster of white cubes and towers, and the reservoir as light-blue domes. A speck of gold flashed up suddenly as a sunbeam was refracted off the gilt clock on the tower of the amir's palace.

For seamen, a moment like this is always a festive occasion, a joy. Putting to sea is preceded by loading, unloading, port and customs formalities. All are busy, preoccupied, slightly nervous, irritated even. With the port left behind astern of the ship, the crew knows that life is now going to settle into the habitual pattern of watches, fatigue duties and leisure hours. In due course the clicking of domino pieces on the table-top will come from the messroom, and every morning the crew will be wakened by the watch navigator's voice over the public address system:

Continued. For beginning see No. 12, 1988.

"Reveille, men! Our latitude... Longitude.. Air temperature... Wind velocity..."

The shore has faded into the distance. The sea is calm, the visibility excellent. Tankers can be spotted far out our port and starboard sides and well out of the way - proceeding on parallel courses. Now that the ship is safely on her way and no emergency seems forthcoming, the captain could well retire to his cabin - as he normally does - leaving the watch navigator in charge. Nevertheless, Captain Vladimir Lukich Kabanenko stays on the bridge.

The captain is fiftyish, tall and broad-shouldered, his grey eyes wary, and his rotund and kindly face bearing a look of frowning concentration.

Overall, what's going on on board the Ivan Karateyev does not quite fit into the usual post-departure routine. It is very quiet on the bridge. All one hears are curt questions, curt orders, and matter-of-fact answers and acknowledgements. No small talk, just the babble of Arabic and English short-range radio messages.

One can discern other deviations from normal. The watch on duty includes, besides the coxswain and the navigator, two lookouts scanning the horizon with their binoculars from the bridge extension wings. A pile of sailing directions is topped with a blue-bound book entitled "Foreign Naval Vessel Identification Guide."

The Ivan Karateyev is officially classified as "a universal dry-cargo ship." Actually, it is a regular "tramp," not confined to a definite line but roaming the oceans, its skipper seldom knowing what kind of cargo is waiting to be picked up in the next port and where he is to take it.

Last spring the ship was sent to the Persian Gulf. Such trips are now all in a day's work. They discharged a batch of oranges in Novorossiisk and took on cement pipes for Dubai... That turned out to be a trip to remember...

It was long before my departure from Moscow that I learned what had happened to the Ivan Karateyev. Having left my belongings in the cabin, I walked along the portside looking for traces of damage. They were barely discernible. The holes had not been welded. The missile-riddled shell had been replaced by new steel plates. A few dents, carefully painted over, appeared only on the chimney.

Nobody had any time to spare for me on that busy leg of the trip, so I just asked for permission to leaf through the ship and engine-room logs.

"Wednesday, May 6. Persian Gulf.

"12.00. Fixed our position by Shah Elem beacon. Latitude... Longitude... Lookouts seamen Klimenko and Chechetka briefed and posted. Watch taken over by Second Mate S. Mysik.

"12.26. Two speedboats approaching from Shah Elem beakon. Captain summoned to bridge.

"12.27. Captain on bridge. Boats approaching ship at high speed.

"12.30. Boats within 30-40 m of portside. Aremed. No flags or identification signs..."

Vladimir Kabanenko:

"From the wheelhouse where we now are the boats could no longer be seen. They concealed themselves under the bridge fairwater. I walked out onto the extension wing thinking they'd ask me where we were bound and what our cargo was. Instead, I saw them aiming their coaxial machine guns and multi-rail missile launchers at us. Just threatening? They couldn't possibly open fire, I said to myself. Nevertheless, I told Mysik to order men off the portside. No sooner had he passed on the word than one of those on the leading boat - there were four or five of them for all I could see - the one standing next to the missile launcher squatted and pressed his palms to his ears..."

Valentina Gunina, pantry keeper on the Ivan Karateyev:

"Lunch was just over. On Wednesday we always serve chicken and fried potatoes. The men who had gone off the watch had joined the rest for the meal. Then the three of us - Valya Teplova, the cook, Lyuda Korotkova, the galley attendant on duty, and myself - sat down to eat. Suddenly we heard Sergei Mysik's voice over the PA system saying: "All to starboard." That didn't concern us, we thought, and stayed put. We didn't hear the first shots, only saw a round hole in the portlight and fragments of glass flying across the messroom...

"'Hey, girls, what's the matter with that glass?' I said. 'Look, it's broken!'"

Entry in the engine-room log:

"12.31. Hole in the engine-room skylight.

"12.37. Hole in the engine-room wall near the skylight. Firemain and freon system damaged. Smoke in the engine-room. Main propulsion engine stopped..."

The first bursts of the gunboat's large-calibre machine guns knocked the Ivan Karateyev's aerials off. The captain had SOS sent out, but it never went on the air. Missiles pierced the side plating and exploded in crew accommodation quarters. A fire started in the engine-room...

According to an entry in the ship's log, the shooting lasted about 15 minutes. Having probably run out of ammunition, the gunboats retreated towards the Shah Elem beacon.

Mines from the Persian Gulf Photo from Spiegel (F.R.G.)

Heading for the Strait of Hormuz

Repaired, the Ivan Karateyev is in the Persian Gulf again. A missile pallet - round, heavy, a bit larger than the palm of my hand, with six nozzles to make the projectile rotate - lies on the plotting table keeping a chart down.

"You must be a brave girl to have come back here after what happened," I told Valentina Gunina. "Oh, I don't know," she replied. "Some quit after that trip. I can understand them, but then shells never hit the same place twice, do they?"

Valentina has had a hard life, losing her father, a coal miner, as a tot of three and working since the age of sixteen as a house painter, a plasterer, seamstress... She has been with the Ivan Karateyev for six years now. She is still waiting for the room in a hostel promised her back in Zhdanov after the shooting incident. She hopes she'll get it after this trip is over.

We stand on the deck. The enormous moon has reached its zenith - a sight uncommon in our parts. The radar aerial rotates overhead as if trying to grind the twinkling blue stars, and seems to succeed in doing so: fine silvery stardust pours

down onto the water to trace our wake with a myriad of luminous sparks. As far out as the eye can see the Gulf is spangled with the lights of off-shore oil fields - some bright, others dimmed to a barely perceptible glow.

In this area the radar screen appears to be powdered with snow, and it is hard to distinguish between stationary and moving objects, between oil platforms and tankers, let alone discern a tiny high-speed target blip in the "snow blizzard" of radar hash.

Vladimir Lukich remains on the bridge right through the night. In the morning the American helicopter carrier Okinawa appears. A few helicopters are out on deck, whirling their rotors, and the rest lurk somewhere in the carrier's steel entrails. I pick up the "Identification Guide" from the shelf.

"Displacement 18,000 tons. Thirty-two helicopters. Complement 500 crewmen and 2,000 Marines."

Signal flags on the Okinawa's halyard flutter in the wind. "Engaged in hydrographic survey," their message goes. "Manoeuvring difficult." A polite warning to a passing ship to keep well away. They say that the Okinawa sticks around here, in the northern part of the Gulf, most of the time, with an American destroyer or frigate invariably tagging along.

A few words about the Gulf proper. Crudely crescent-shaped, it has its northern tip in the mouth of the Shatt al Arab river, and its southern one in the Strait of Hormuz. The 240,000 sq m Gulf is about three times the size of our White Sea. Although not too deep, the Gulf is navigable practically throughout, but, as I have already mentioned elsewhere, cramped for space.

On a map, the Gulf is divided by a line stretching from northwest to southeast. Iran has proclaimed the waters east of this line a zone of hostilities. In the west, warship traffic is restricted by other Gulf states, territorial waters. As a result, there is barely enough space left to swing a cat.

A bird's-eye view of the Gulf deserves a special mention. The bottom shows through, projecting an intricate pattern of veins and dots onto its malachite-green surface. One can see heavy supertankers plodding along, with even large warships looking like tiny playthings by their side. The Gulf is mottled with oil platforms. Just off the low western shore there stretch the blurred outlines of the famous Great Pearl Bank. On the deep eastern side, rocky islands protrude from the water. Iranian gunboats belonging to the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution use some of them as bases.

The nearer the Strait of Hormuz, the busier the traffic. I transferred from the Ivan Karateyev to the Soviet minesweeper Turbinist which was riding at anchor waiting for us. I was lucky. No sooner had I climbed on board than the wind began to gain strength. The minesweeper danced on the water like a restive colt. A heavy anchor chain lashed it across its starboard bilge.

On board the Turbinist

Mikhail Ivanovich Batuyev, the Turbinist's skipper, showed me a map.

U.S. naval ships escorting Kuwaiti tankers flying U.S. flags.

Reuters-TASS telephoto

Remember how children draw the rising sun? A horizontal line and a semi-circle above it, with "rays" sticking out of it fanwise. There were similar drawings on the map. They designated mines. Most of those found in the Gulf are of the old electrocontact anchored kind. Seamen call them "horned death."

On impact, the mine's lead horn smashes a vial of acid placed under it which activates the circuit and causes a shattering explosion.

"Mines are usually planted as deep as a tanker's draught - 7 to 9 m. There are drifting mines as well - they have either been set loose by a storm or, for all we know, cut adrift on purpose so as to let the southwesterly current carry them towards the Kuwaiti tankers.

"I wish you had come earlier to see us recently when we fired such a mine. That might have been of interest to you."

Well, I wasn't so sure. The last time I had seen such a mine was in Irbe Strait in 1948. The Baltic was still full of them then and seamen called it "Potato soup." An evil-looking horned ball had suddenly floated into view. We didn't like it at all, I must confess.

Warrant officer Valentin Manchenko of the Turbinist spotted a drifting mine while keeping watch, and gunner Alisher Akhunov fired it.

"How's service going, Alisher?"

"Fine, we've got used to it here."

His swarthy face was already wind-beaten by the sharp winter "shimal" which was still gaining in intensity. Alisher manned his automatic AA gun, with his feet planted far apart. As we talked, both of us held on to the gun's platform.

The deck was heaving under our feet, and wind velocity was now about twenty metres a second. The anchor had dragged clear, and the ship was drifting. The roar of the wind was drowned by the ringing of the alarm gong "Man your stations, raise the anchor!"

A queue in the port of Dubai

...A crippled dry-cargo ship emerged onto the horizon at dawn. First, the pink haze at the edge of the sky was marred by a stroke of soot, then came puffs of smoke, and finally a fire-gutted superstructure - or rather its black iron carcass - appeared. We saw the flame spread amid ships. The rudder blade and the dead screw propeller were high and dry. On closer inspection it turned out that the ship was deserted, that its name was Mare, and that it belonged to Panama.

"The things you see here," someone in the pilot house said. "Unlit tankers, unmanned dry-cargo ships..."

The empty motorship drifted past, like the Flying Dutchman, and disappeared astern.

Later, on board the submarine hunter Admiral Tributs, I heard a small teleprinter breaking into a clatter as reports on beacons extinguished and relit, on everything having to do with navigation

safety, started coming in. Vladimir Afanasenko, senior navigator, ripped a length of narrow paper tape off the machine. It said: "Persian Gulf. Sunken ship. Bearings..." He plotted another symbol on the map to mark the "last resting place" of the Mare on the bottom of the Gulf near the port of Dubai.

Then word came from the Ivan Karateyev reporting a gunboat attack on a tanker of unknown origin at the edge of the territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates, near Jabal Ali beacon. I thought of Valentina Gunina, recalled her question as to whether shells could hit the same place twice, and her shy smile as she waited for an answer.

According to the British insurance company Lloyd's, 178 ships were attacked in the Persian Gulf last year. Before this year is out this figure may be surpassed. Nikolai Burlaka, the skipper of the Karadagh refrigerator ship, told me that many ships lay at anchor down south, at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz, their crews having signed off. In the port of Dubai, damaged ships queued up to go into dock...

A strange, absurd war, this. The hostilities between Iran and Iraq have cost many neutral states a heavy toll in lives and ships.

Blows are struck violently - and blindly, as it were. There have been several cases of Iranian gunboats attacking tankers loaded with Iranian oil, and of the same ship being attacked by Iranians and Iraqis, in turn. On one occasion, an Iraqi Phantom slammed a missile into an American frigate riding at anchor, although Iraq and the U.S. are not at war.

These absurd goings-on have a certain rhythm. Here is an example - convincing if not particularly recent.

October 5, 1987. After a pause in hostilities, Iraq air-assaults five Iranian tankers at once.

October 15. An Iranian missile hits a U.S.-flagged Kuwaiti supertanker.

October 19. U.S. planes smash the Iranian oil platform from which the missile has presumably been launched.

October 22. In retaliation, a long-range Iranian missile hits a Kuwaiti oil terminal...

Now, following a series of such attacks, the Kuwaitis have set up radio decoys to protect their oil ports. I trained my binoculars on them as we passed by and saw low-floating platforms with glittering sharp shark's-tooth spikes.

"Camels of the Gulf"

I don't want to give the reader the impression that non-stop fighting is in progress in the Gulf, that it's like all hell let loose... The sea is not solid earth, you can't draw a front line there, and the Gulf is vast... The hostilities as such have their ebbs and flows. Everything seems to suggest that Iran, for instance, has planted no mines over the past two months - but then the gunboats of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution have become somewhat more active, their activity peaking in the first half of February when Iran observed an anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

I'd like to mention here the small wooden "dow" vessels, the "camels of the Gulf," which look exactly the same today as when Arab craftsmen built them centuries ago. These slender, teak-planked boats used to carry pearl divers and bring all sorts of merchandise from India, fresh water from the mouth of the Shatt al Arab River and holdfuls of silvery zubeida fish from the high seas.

Sails have been replaced by the diesel engine, but the time-tested shape and construction have come down to today unchanged. The dows still ply the Gulf. Sometimes the floats of dow-trailed fishing nets frighten seamen, who mistake them for drifting mines.

As I watched fishermen at work in the Gulf, I recalled Afghanistan.

...Fierce fighting had broken out in Panjshir Valley squeezed in between high mountain ridges. Machine guns spattered fire from caves gaping on steep mountain slopes. An Afghan peasant worked his tuny field with a bullock-drawn plough, regardless of all the din. The white spot of his turban was plainly visible from the helicopter. His wooden plough left the dark scratch of a fresh furrow behind it. The Afghan was doing his life's work, war or no war.

They say that since the outbreak of the "tanker war," demand for dows has been greater than ever. Under the circumstances, they are eminently suitable for carrying small cargoes from port to port. They are virtually impervious to mines, and no plane will waste a missile on such a target.

Waiting for the Karadagh

Let us now go back to the Turbinist. How is the mine-sweeper's crew doing?

"We have got used to it here," Alisher Akhunov told me. That was aptly put.

Over the months that the Turbinist has been in the Gulf after relieving the mine-sweeper Kursky Komsomolets, its crew has got used to many things - for instance, to the peculiarities of the local winter wind which, like the Sevastopol-Leningrad express train, is strictly two-way, rushing along either south- or northwards, back and forth. Therefore the navigator can all but dispense with a compass and go by the wind. Our seamen have got used to rolling and pitching. In the daytime, when all of them are busy, this heaving is not much of a nuisance, but at night it makes life rather miserable, especially for those who are too short to be able to hold their bodies in place by means of a bulkhead-to-bulkhead stretch. But on a stormy night, Iranian gunboats prefer not to leave their Farsi, Abu Musa and other island bases, and no shrill screams for help are heard over the radio.

The Turbinist crewmen have got used to encounters with U.S., French and British warships. The oncoming craft pass well clear of each other and exchange greetings in accordance with naval etiquette. True, French frigates sometimes engage in rather risky manoeuvring.

For the Turbinist's boatswain such encounters are nothing new. Warrant officer Victor Nikolayevich Krolivets has been doing sea service duty for 24 years. He knows the Atlantic and the Mediterranean like the palm of his hand. He can tell you a thing or two about Port Said, Algiers, Latakia... But if you really want to turn him on, ask him about his grandson. Alyoshka is eight, and he can't wait for his granddad to take him fishing again.

I found it hard to believe at first that Victor was as old as that. Lean and athletic, he wears his hair short, cultivates a curling moustache, and there is a merry twinkle in his young blue eyes.

Last but not least, the crew of the Turbinist has learned to live with danger from day to day: the mine-sweeper pilots Soviet merchantmen through mine hazard zones. It has covered miles and miles of mine-infested waters over the past few months.

Sonarman Vitaly Romanovich showed me to his action station. I saw an insntrument board gleaming with numerous dials, fresh enamel paint and nickel. Thin styluses of automatic recorders traced wavy lines on paper tapes. My host offered me a headset, and I heard sonar bleeps - intermittent and plaintive like the cries of a wader at night.

As he unwound a roll of recorder paper, Vitaly explained to me what the graphic indications on it stood for: a thicket of a sawn-off steel piles, an underwater oil pipeline and a sunken barge... Then, as if to test his knowledge of the Gulf bottom he put the roll aside and went on speaking from memory:

"A large pile of stones there, fish shoals exactly at mine-fields depth... You can never mistake fish for mines: mines give you much sharper echo-bleeps..."

The Turbinist crew has got used to many things, except the long waits for letters from home. They looked forward to the arrival of the Karadagh which was to bring in food, fresh vegetables and, hopefully, mail, which was what mattered most.

(To be concluded)

Masterpieces of triviality

Mass culture and freedom of choice

Leonid Ionin

The bulk of what I have read to date about mass culture has been condemnatory. Mass culture has been condemned on different counts. In the first place, it is lowbrow, it breeds the cheap and the vulgar. Secondly, it distracts people from serious occupations like politics, for instance, and the recasting of existing social relations. Thirdly, it is bourgeois culture, bourgeois in origin, artificially engendered and implanted by the ruling circles of bourgeois countries for the aforementioned purpose. That is how we wrote about mass culture until quite recently, both in popular booklets and in learned treatises.

It cannot be said that there was not a grain of truth in all this. There was and there still is. Mass culture can indeed be silly and it can somtimes divert attention away from the meaningful and good. And as often as not it comes to us from the West, under glossy labels and captivating names like "Madonna," "Duran Duran," "McDonald's," "Rambo," and the like. But is that the whole story? Before we denounce and turn away in disgust, it is perhaps in place to take a closer look at mass culture, and to establish exactly what it is, who is this guest so unwelcome for some and so fervently desired by others.

Emotional comfort

I will not be revealing anything new when I say that basically our whole country reads, watches and listens to one and the same thing. This is true of any other country. And not only of individual countries – in some West European countries American programmes take up to three quarters of television time. And what about the Americas – North and South! Cultural imperialism is what the politicians call it. Which means shaping the cultural milieu after a single cultural pattern, imposed either by force or money, and accepted either owing to laxity or carelessness, and in some cases simply out of the sheer lack of will to resist.

And the more desperate the drive for sensations, the more money sensations bring in, the clearer it becomes that people are doomed to watch, to listen and to read the same thing everywhere, day in and day out – thanks to the mass media, which constitute a second atmosphere enveloping the globe. Books put out in hundreds of thousands and millions of copies, newspapers circulated in the tens of millions, hundreds of millions of TV sets – "windows to the world," as they were called until a better designation, "chewing gum for the eyes" or "the idiot box" was found for them. Add to this the radio waves screaming, roaring, whispering something from the "fourth dimension" – and we get an exhaustive explanation of why people not only view, listen to and read one and the same thing but feel, think and react in the same way.

Man is by no means as autonomous a being as he might seem. His modern spiritual environment leaves him too few variants to choose from. Take the radio. It appears to offer a wide variety of programmes. One sociologist recently took the trouble to count them. It turns out that as regards music, for example, 40 per cent of broadcasting time is allotted to "serious," classical music, and 30 per cent to light music. The choice is ours, it seems. But the trouble is that classical music is broadcast in the morning and during the day when we are at work, while the evening is given over to lightweight variety entertainment. That was a year or two ago; now in the morning hours, too, "120 minutes" programme entertains us while we clean our teeth and wolf down our breakfast.

In the evenings we seat ourselves comfortably before the TV screen. Here, too, the choice is limited. You have four programmes to choose from.

On one channel there is Alla Pugacheva, on another, a football match, on the third, "The Aquarium." I am willing to agree with anyone who maintains that "The Aquarium" is a lyrical group with social significance and that Alla Pugacheva possesses all the virtues. I don't deny it, I like them myself. That is not the point. The point is that we know exactly what to expect of them.

You can always switch it off. But this always requires an emotional effort because with the TV dead, you are left to your own devices and feel lonely. Therefore, most people keep their once blue and now multicoloured screens on.

It gives us emotional comfort. It gives us a sense of being linked with the universe. Not by some nebulous link that fills you with yearning, a feeling of dissatisfaction and a desire to search for meaning, but a cosy, familiar link. We know exactly what we are going to see when we switch on one or another programme. And we immerse ourselves in that world as in a warm bath, happily and with total abandonment. Our emotional system is tuned to our favourite spectacle on the screen more exactly than the antenna on the roof to the wave length. The televiewer has "partaken" of this fare more than once before and is now eager to gorge himself with it once again.

This is mass culture – the dealing out of stereotyped emotions. Therein lies its attraction, its power.

Ersatz democracy

But herein also lies its weakness. Its extraordinary scale, its universal appeal are achieved at the expense of depth. In millions of heads, millions of emotional and intellectual mechanisms the products of mass culture strike the same chords. And evoke an identical reaction. Indeed, it would be naive to assume that one and the same melody, the same picture, the same style, would make an

equally deep imprint on millions of people. If the effect is identical it is most likely to be not deep but shallow. Identically shallow.

Thus, it could be said that mass culture, each of its masterpieces, is something of an aesthetic smallest common denominator of the human being.

There is something offensive and even degrading in the word "smallest." By using it I would seem to be joining the denunciators of mass culture.

But let us examine the question more closely. What is meant by the smallest common denominator in this context? It is what every individual has in common, at any rate every one of that vast majority of people who at a given moment of history draw on the available stock of mass culture masterpieces.

What is common is not necessarily bad. If people had nothing in common they would never be able to understand one another. Hence it may be safely said that mass culture brings out what is common to all of us. And the more popular the hero of the piece or the piece as a whole, the more unerringly has the singer, the writer or producer penetrated to what is innermost in human nature, common to all people. And found a response.

Mass culture is the culture of identical people, it is the triumph of their democracy. Where this democracy reigns supreme mass culture flourishes. And where there is no such democracy, mass culture takes its place.

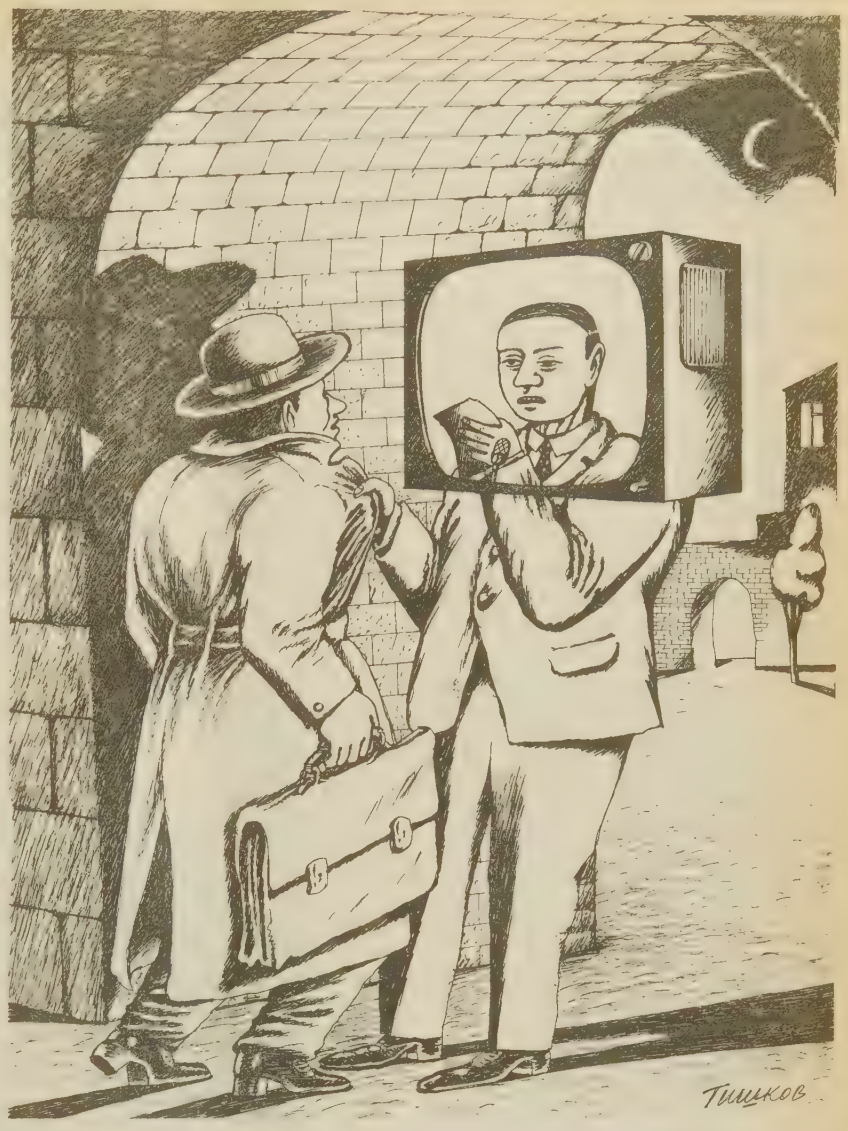
Back to nature

That this kind of democracy is rather flat, one might even say vulgar, is another matter. After all, every human has two arms, two legs and a head. There you have what is really the smallest common denominator. Merely to record this common feature would be the height of banality.

This is the pitfall that awaits the masterpieces of mass culture. The wider they are spread the "thinner," more trivial they become meaningwise. I am afraid that the song the entire globe will sing will consist not of words with any meaning but of the simplest interjections. It will be totally meaningless, a universal emotion is all that will remain. But will it come within the realm of culture?

The love moan, say, is universally understood. And so mass culture gives thousands upon thousands of imitations of the simplest emotions. Donna Summer moans, Amanda Lear, the secret pupil of Salvador Dali, moans, Michael Jackson emits his own moan, a manly one – but all the moans are equally understandable in the Eskimo igloo, the Indian pagoda and on the Limpopo River.

There you have cultural imperialism. Perhaps that is the road of mass culture – from culture to nature, a return of culture to its origins?



Drawing by L. Tishkov

There are no causes for concern

Nor are there any grounds for panic. No mass-culture Apocalypse is forthcoming. Culture will not perish.

The search for the smallest common denominator is a good thing. But that denominator somehow eludes detection. In a modern society enveloped in radio waves and swept by tidal waves of books and newspapers, thousands and millions of cultural models are constantly being produced, models not of universal but of limited appeal, comprehensible and acceptable to only a narrow circle, so to say, of relatives, friends, coevals, compatiots or colleagues.

Thus two levels of culture emerge. To the first belongs that which is circulated far and wide by the mass information media and manufactured at giant factories, in short, the objects of mass consumption.

To the second belong the narrow circles. It is in these circles and at their intersections that cultural values are preserved and multiplied. It is from them that mass culture, for want of its own wellsprings, draws its subject-matter and content.

Here are a few examples. National (or even regional) cultures have produced folk rock, country music, jazz, pizza, yoga, ahimsa (the policy of civil disobedience) and many other things. Cowboy pants started a fashion that has swept the world. In the late 1950s and early 1960s geologists' lore suddenly became extremely popular in our country. From the culture of what professional or social group the "metallists" borrowed their style is still a mystery. Ours, I would say, is a mass-culture epoch which draws its values from the arsenals of youth culture. Hence also the specific features of mass-

culture democracy, with all its peculiarities. The tastes and attitudes of the young have their immediate effect on the character, rhythms and themes of pop music.

From time to time a cultural tsunami sweeps over the islets of conventional feelings and tastes, compelling their populace to protect themselves by building dams and erecting barriers.

But no sooner has one tsunami rolled over than another looms. The styles of mass culture are short-lived. Some of them disappear without a trace, others fossilize into classics, and still others revive what seemed to have gone for good.

What happens here is much like what happens to fashions. No sooner has a fashion gained ascendancy than it is dethroned. Like mass culture, it is tied to some particular social, national or age group. We shall not try to analyze why this happens, but the fact is that a style of dress, behaviour, singing or thinking suddenly becomes the fashion everywhere. It stands out against the general cultural background and anyone who wants to draw attention to himself will begin to dress, to think, to walk and to sing his songs in exactly that style. Others, envious of him, follow suit. The style spreads farther and farther afield. And, finally, there come the times when the majority are in the vogue.

At that very moment the style changes. Some other means have to be found for attracting attention. From that moment – and it is indetectable, indefinable and unstoppable – a new vogue comes in.

Today efforts are being made to deprive the mode as well as mass culture, of spontaneity. In the West, this is being done by corporations and individual bold spirits; in our country, mainly by state organizations.

The state with its bureaucratic machinery found it difficult to get into the rhythm of the trend. And hence it tries not to hurry, but seeks to stop or at any rate to slow down the unstoppable. That, naturally, does not work.

In the West, the strategy is different. The creators of mass culture, like the creators of the mode, try to be ahead of the current, to swim with the tide along with their ideological and artistic baggage. This is a risky business – for the tidal wave is capable of sweeping away firms, film studios, publishers, fashion houses, singers, artists and musicians. Some perish, others survive to rise on the crest of the wave to the top of the world.

But the important thing is that these waves are inevitable. As inevitable as man's desire to seek and to find that which is common to the human race, to reveal the deeply hidden kinship between all men.

"Pop"

I have a friend, a young philosopher who has an art education, is well-informed and has rather good taste. His favourite word is "pop." It is a word used abroad, in capitalist countries, mainly to designate mass culture.

What is interesting is how he uses that word. When he hears a first-rate rock group, his eyes gleam and he says delightedly: "Pop, that's real pop!" If he watches some mass-produced American movie, a kitsch product intended for the undiscriminating, he waves his hand disdainfully and says: "Aw, pop..."

I was intrigued by this curious way of using the word. At first I was puzzled, but after a while I found the key to the riddle.

Pop applies both to the one and the other – to a genuinely creative assimilation and mental processing of the artist's personal experience and to a product of mass culture that has been duplicated in millions of copies, a product that is one of the host of the smallest common denominators of the human race. One word can be used to describe them because there is no insurmountable barrier between them. Because mass culture does not exist by itself, in isolation from the culture of the "narrow circle." They are part of the same life. They are interconnected in innumerable ways, they flow over into one another. This inner oneness is conveyed by the word "pop." And whether the artist creates the thing real or the fake depends on his talent. The difference between the genuine and the fake is expressed not in the words, but in the intonation.

For this reason I do not wish to join in pouring invective on mass culture and still less to condemn it on ideological grounds. In the final analysis ideology, too, is a mass phenomenon.

Not long ago the newspapers announced that the mass consumer was to be gladdened by the advent of the McDonald's quick-lunch eating places where, the papers said, we could get nourishing, tasty, filling meals quickly and conveniently. McDonald's is something like a four-channel TV: you know in advance what you are going to get. When I read that I recalled an ironic piece by the avant-garde writer and artist Andy Warhol. "What's tops in Stockholm?" he wrote. "McDonald's. What's tops in New York? McDonald's. What's tops in Florence? McDonald's. There's no McDonald's in Moscow and Peking. That means there's nothing good there."

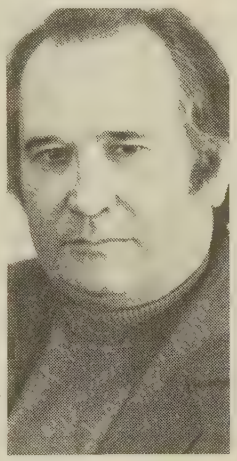
Drawing from Corriere della Sera (Italy)

The press assured me that McDonald's were going to be tops in Moscow. I found myself thinking like my friend: "Aw, pop."

So pop is a word with a wide range of meanings. Like the words "mass culture" it has replaced. It takes a multitude of forms. It is useless to fight it, and just as useless to curse it. But to evaluate it is necessary. And the essence of the evaluation lies not so much in the word as in the intonation.

Holding a mirror to society

VICTOR PEREVEDENTSEV



At the beginning of 1989 a national census will be conducted in the Soviet Union. Unlike day-to-day surveys that fail to return comprehensive data about their targets, a census provides a unique chance of bringing all the information about every individual together at one time and later, to obtain any combination of data from that package. This makes a census indispensible.

Leo Tolstoy, who was actively involved in the 1882 census of Moscow, wrote that "the importance of the census for society and the interest taken in it are explained by the fact that it holds a mirror to society and everyone of us."

What can we expect to see in that mirror today? A considerable, albeit slowing, growth of the population, a significant aging of the population, the concentration of the population in big cities, and the migration of people to southern regions and regions of industrial development situated largely in the north.

The important distinction of the forthcoming census is that it will also survey the available housing stock. The acuteness of the housing problem in our country is due not only to the shortage of housing or to the fact that most of it now in use is inadequate (i.e., old and lacking in modern facilities), but also to uneven distribution. Some people have less than five square metres of floorspace, while others have thirty, forty square metres or more. The procedure whereby housing is distributed has not been reviewed, except for a few details, since the 1920s. Understandably, it is no longer in keeping with the requirements of the day, but in order to be able to arrive at a new mechanism for distributing and leasing housing we need comprehensive and reliable demographic data. Such data is not now available.

There are several social and economic problems that cannot be satisfactorily resolved because of the absence of reliable and comprehensive demographic statistics.

I have often heard teachers in Central Asia proudly report that most young people leaving village schools stay at home and do not go to the cities at a time when overpopulation in rural regions of Central Asia is increasing rapidly. Young people in rural regions must become more mobile. Specialists are familiar with the situation, but to all intents and purposes nothing has been done to deal with the underlying demographic problem. One reason for this is that since statistics are not available to the general public, only scientific circles are aware that such a problem exists.

Will the next population census fill in statistical blanks?

People who come to develop the resources of the North are often not provided with the barest minimum in living conditions. As a result, the rate of migration to and from the North is high, but again, only a handful of people are aware of the situation. The authorities have actually reconciled themselves with the prospect of the North continuously lagging behind the higher-developed parts of the country. At the end of last year the U.S.S.R. State Committee for Statistics did publish some previously classified data about the natural migration of the population, but the bulk of the data about migration and many other statistical and demographic data badly needed by specialists is still classified.

Under conditions of expanding openness and democratization in our society this situation arouses concern. The public at large must be aware of the outstanding social and demographic problems in order to be able to deal with them effectively. The absence of comprehensive information about the social and demographic processes under way in the country prevents the general public from realizing what is going on.

Previous censuses conducted on a national scale failed to compensate for that lack of information and the sitution has grown perceptibly worse since the mid-1970s. The quantity of statistics published as a result of censuses has declined dramatically from the 60 census volumes published in 1926 to one volume published after the 1979 census. The 1926 census remains the most comprehensive ever in all of its parameters. The results of the 1979 census were published in such a way as to make them unsuitable for serious research.

Will the forthcoming national census resolve all these problems and fill in the blanks in statistics? A gret deal depends on how well it is prepared. Usually national conferences of statisticians attended by historians, economists and geographers were held well in advance of censuses to plan them and discuss ways of processing their results. This time the State Committee for Statistics has decided to do without a scientific conference. Does a parochial approach to an undertaking as important as a national census really ensure its success?

Moral revival

Professor MIKHAIL MCHEDLOV

On the eve of the 19th all-Union CPSU conference to assess the first results and chart further courses of revolutionary renewal, it seems appropriate to reflect on some burning moral issues.

Morality is inseparably linked with social conditions which may either promote or hinder its advancement. The revolutionary perestroika of Soviet society initiated by the CPSU gives an increasing role to spiritual values and the moral factor which is a powerful stimulant of radical changes.

●

Sooner or later a man faces the eternal questions: What is the meaning of life? What the moral and ideological guidelines should we choose? What do we mean by man's calling in life, his responsibilities, his attitude to good and evil? Marxism-Leninism believes morality to derive from social factors. But a simplistic approach to morality is alien to it. The main emphasis of scientific communism is on the value of man and respect for his inalienable rights and dignity. The intrinsic value of the individual, therefore, excludes Stalin's definition of him as a "little cog."

Oversimplified leftist reductionism of everything to narrow class and material interests is far from reflecting the essence of the Marxist approach. Many moral norms are eternal. Great value will always attach to love, compassion, parental care for children, aid to the elderly. Clearly the main cause for many of our troubles was and remains society's genuine declining moral standards and a certain depreciation of spiritual values. Speaking of flaws in moral education, it has not always been possible to this day to integrate universal human and class (socialist) norms.

Equally unacceptable is the increasingly fashionable tendency to distinguish between and even counterpose universal human and socialist values.

A moral stance worthy of man cannot be selective. It cannot be confined to a single domain or even to a number of domains. It should be implemented always and everywhere without exception.

One cannot be a decent person and be racially prejudiced. Disrespect for the traditions of one's own people and indifference to their past, present and future are as immoral and deficient as the desire to counterpose one's own people's values to others. This is, incidentally, demonstrated by a number of Pamyat (Memory) society extremists whose hostility towards other peoples merges paradoxically with hostility towards their compatriots if they do not share their chauvinistic views.

MAN WORTHY OF THE NAME CANNOT BE INSENSITIVE TO GOOD AND EVIL

A man worthy of the name cannot remain insensitive or indifferent (displaying, as Leo Tolstoy would say, "meanness of soul") in the presence of good and evil wherever they are found. He reacts vigorously to any flouting of social justice, national sentiments and human dignity.

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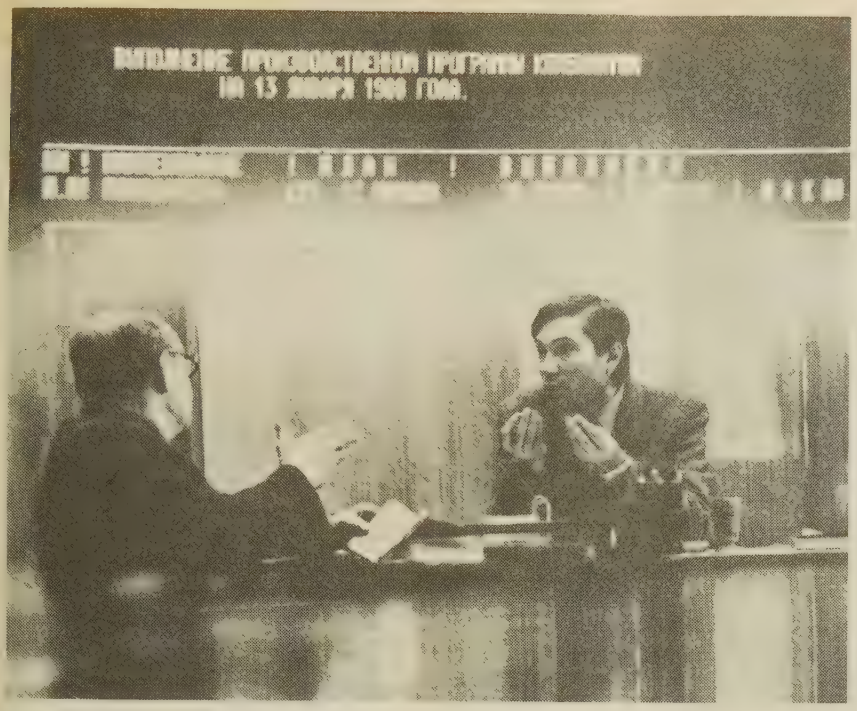
In the course of the seven decades since the triumph of the Great October Revolution, the Soviet people have achieved much in their political, economic, social and spiritual development. Such positive moral attitudes and values as intolerance of social and national oppression, and injustice in whatever form, the idea of equality irrespective of sex, race, nationality, etc., are widely hold. This historic asset of socialist society is a source of legitimate pride and moral satisfaction to the Soviet people.

Yet even the most impressive achievements should not overshadow past crimes or errors, or the absurdities of the period of stagnation in the development of Soviet society. This is all the more important as aftermath of these phenomena, which are alien to socialism, have not been confined to the economy and the social domain. They have also done considerable moral damage. Therefore an open discussion of any immoral phenomena, past or present, is a major prerequisite for the promotion of the spiritual values of Leninist socialism.

It cannot be denied that contempt for law, misinformation, bribery, defrauding the state, abuse of power, encouraging toadyism and eulogizing, permissiveness and irresponsibility have all had an adverse impact on the social climate. This has all taken place in our society and could not but have affected it. It has resulted in flagging interest in public affairs, lack of idealism, scepticism, and indifference to moral incentives. There were increasing numbers of people, some of them young, whose only goal in life was material prosperity and profit at any cost. The growth of alchoholism and the spread of drug addiction and crime were an indication of declining morals.

Here are the ingredients of the paradoxical situation that arose in our society: a semblance of total well-being and the lavish extolling of real and imaginary features of our way of life, side by side with perfectly obvious moral decline, miscalculation and failings. The lack of public spirit and ideals made themselves felt in all social domains and, in the first place, in people's attitudes and aspirations. Not only laws but also many fundamental socialist values were trampled upon.

In other words, what is required is the consolidation, restoration and reconstruction of the moral foundation of our life. But it is still being asserted to this day that the



Uninhibited initiative, encouragement of creative endeavour, non-stereotyped thinking - all this is essential to perestroika.

Photo by Y. Inyakin

moral failings of society are limited to so-called "survivals of the past" in people's minds.

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So where is that link that we must grasp to pull out the whole chain?

The answer is clear: democratization in the Leninist sense of the word and glasnost, guaranteeing real conditions where each person, each work collective, in fact, all groups of the population have complete information, can discuss and openly criticize any shortcomings and constructively resolve vital problems.

By candidly exposing the roots of negative phenomena in our society, our party has performed an act of moral courage. It is clearing the air in the country, heightening the people's sense of responsibility for the future of their country and socialism and revitalizing Soviet morality. This places special moral responsibilities on Party members. It amounts to the implementation in contemporary conditions of Lenin's idea of making greater demands on Communists than on non-Party people and of cleansing up "the Party of those who are only 'out for' the benefits accruing to membership of a government party and do not want to bear the burden of devoted work on behalf of communism." Getting rid of moral renegades and promoting everywhere a climate of mutual exactingness, comradeship and equality among Party members will greatly consolidate Party ethics. The 19th all-Union Party conference will probably have something important to say on this score. The moral health of our society can only be restored, given the guiding role of the Party in it, by promoting the moral integrity and honesty of each Party member.

THE PARTY MEMBER'S HONESTY AND MORAL INTEGRITY IS THE KEY TO SOCIETY'S MORAL HEALTH

We must not only know and tell the truth, but also live according to the truth, which rules out any compromises with one's own conscience. To live and work honestly, put an end to passivity and apathy - it is high time these words ceased to be ritualistic slogans, used relevantly and irrelevantly, and were translated into practice.

This is particularly important because the modern mentality is more than ever before characterized by scepticism and doubt. Only the consistent implementation of the principles of openness, candour, truth and democracy will revive faith in our ideals and restore the spiritual values of socialism.

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Hence bridging the gap between word and action, between reality and declared policy, between moral and ethical norms and practice.

Extreme manifestations of this gap are still fresh in everyone's memory: it was the corrupt minister of the interior and his deputy, the secretary of a regional Party committee, whose duty it was to implement the world's most progressive ideology, who was sentenced to death, while the country's top-ranking leader remained inactive, and regularly receiving high national awards. As long as there are any manifestations of double standards, formalism and window-dressing on the one hand, and the real, on the other, no perestroika will save us from a resurgence of that hypocrisy and immorality which is alien to the very foundations of socialism. As long as there is no guarantee of equal responsibility, regardless of rank, for the same offence (and practice shows that allowances for high ranking official status are still being made) a major breakthrough in moral education can hardly be expected. Recurrences of an old disease - leading an immoral life while expecting others to lead a moral one - are still depraving the minds of the people, particularly the young.

I should like to emphasize once again that in getting rid of these immoral phenomena, meaningful and broad democracy has a key role to play. The following dialectic interrelation is essential: the process of democratization can go on only in a healthy social atmosphere. Therefore it requires not merely educated and politically mature people, but people with civic responsibility and high moral standards. On the other hand, democracy itself gives a lesson in morality and promotes it with the free discussion of topical issues and pressing problems, and exchanging ideas in an atmosphere of open and all-round public control. It is representative public opinion that can bring to reason those who are not averse to using democratic phraseology, assert themselves, cause a stir or even flaunt their "bold" views. Criticism of time-serving, of the promotion of group and sometimes personal interests by invoking perestroika as well as of any other digression from socialist moral principles, is also democracy in action.

And, last but not least, it should be emphasized in the perestroika period that morality cannot be promoted by immoral means. The cultivation of human relations, tolerance towards differences of opinion, and interest in revealing and taking into account different views, are all part and parcel of the democratization of society.

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Concerning price rises in Poland

JERZY URBAN

The cost of living has again risen in Poland. Meat, bread, sugar, smoked foods and butter were up by an average of 40 per cent last month. Rent and community services were up by half. Prices of vodka and cigarettes also increased, and petrol rose by 60 per cent. The prices of coal and other fuels, electricity and raw materials are expected to jump by 200 per cent. This is bound to push up the prices of all manufactured goods.

The minimum cost of living, with the new prices of vodka and cigarettes not taken into account, is to climb 36 per cent this year, according to official estimates. True, average wages are to go up correspondingly. This will partly be effected through bonuses and a socially differentiated increase in children's allowances. In industry, the wage rise will also depend on output, and at budget-financed organizations, on labour costs according to branch and profession.

The average real wage is not therefore expected to fall, with some categories of working people standing to benefit and others to lose as a result of the measures.

Results of a referendum

The drastic changes in price-wage relations are the main subject of both private conversations and public debates in Poland. People regard the price situation as a factor in public sentiments and political attitudes.

The price rises are merely a part of the economic reform which has been in progress, albeit sluggishly, since 1982. Last year the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party characterized the five-year results of the reform as vague and anemic. In the same year the draft of the second phase of the economic reform - more profound and radical - was worked out and put forward for nation-wide discussion, along with other political and social reforms to extend democratic principles in government and public life.

Poles found it hard to vote for the draft as it envisaged a rise in prices of almost 100 per cent. Nevertheless, the government decided to let the public know what it expected of them in advance. **The majority of those who took part in the referendum** voted for the second phase of the reform. But the government did not get support from **the majority of the electorate.*** In such cases the opinion of the majority of those who voted has, under the Constitution, only an advisory character.

In accordance with the will expressed by the population at the referendum, the Central Committee of the PUWP, the government and the Sejm (parliament) decided to reduce the scale of price increases. This made it necessary to moderate the radical character of the reforms and set a longer term for the implementation of the economic measures planned earlier.

The price rises were expected to cut subsidies to industry and eliminate the need for government subsidies in purchasing prices of farm products. The idea was to bring Polish prices into line with the world market and ground them more closely in the economy, and help factories soberly to assess the demand for their goods and their production efficiency, that is, give them an idea of costs that would exclude the output of unprofitable goods. It is also known that the degree of self-sufficiency in factories is largely determined by their dependence on government subsidies. In view of the outcome of the referendum, the various tasks in this field will now have to be tackled more slowly than we would have wished.

Hopes for a political explosion

The latest price rises in Poland have evoked a dual reaction abroad. Our trading partners in the West admit that the second phase of the reform is rational and express support for it, but only in words. At the same time, forces anxious to destabilize the situation in Poland and throw it back to the times of political anarchy entertain certain hopes in connection with the price increases.

In 1970, the attempt to raise food prices triggered off strikes and street riots in cities on the Baltic coast. The party committee buildings in Gdansk and

Jerzy Urban is a press spokesman for the Polish government.

***67.32 per cent of the electorate took part in the referendum.**
66.04 per cent of them, or 44.28 per cent of registered voters, approved the reform.

Szczecin were set ablaze and police opened fire on the demonstrators. This drama led to the fall of Wladyslaw Gomulka and his government. Prices remained at their former level.

In 1976, violent demonstrations in the two cities forced Edward Gierek, then first secretary of the party, and Premier Piotr Jaroszewicz to cancel an increase in food prices. In the summer of 1980, a partial and fairly modest rise in the prices of some products led to strikes which soon developed into mass protests in a different, more complex situation. This impelled some political forces in the West to hope that the latest price increase would lead to a new crisis, even, indeed, to a political explosion.

The West's dual attitude to the Polish reform was also clear from its ensuing reaction. While many politicians and experts, as well as the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, commented favourably on our new programme of prices and incomes and even offered their support, the propaganda services of the United States, particularly its radio stations based in Europe, again attempted to provoke a wave of strikes and protests in Poland.

They declared that the reform would fail, that the price rises were unreasonable and that strikes were being called in various parts of the country, and incited Polish workers to follow suit. Having failed to instigate mass protests, the radio stations began to tell the workers what to do: personnel need only demand a wage rise and management will immediately agree, they alleged. The obvious purpose of these calls is to provoke conflicts at factories, bring about an inflation and thus destabilize the home market.

Public reaction to the reform

The Polish leadership was sure, however, that the price increases would not touch off a wave of spontaneous protests. This belief was based on a realistic assessment of public feeling. Prices have been rising steadily over the recent period. Nevertheless, in the past six years their growth has not led to disturbances or strikes. True, at a factory in Lodz 200-odd workers, or less than 10 per cent of employees, laid down their tools following the price increases this year. But the strike only lasted three hours until the payment issue was cleared up.

Poland has drawn a lesson from the past, when prices remained stable for 20 years because of protests or the government's fear of them. Food became so cheap, compared with other goods and the rise in wages, that it disappeared from the shops and rationing had to be introduced. Paradoxical as it may seem, the cost and the purchasing prices of many farm products turned out to be higher than retail prices.

The government annually spent billions of zlotys compensating for this disparity. This upset the economy, impeded its growth and ultimately led, along with other factors, to the economic crisis of 1980-83, when living standards fell off sharply.

At present, the government is informing the population in advance of the date, goals and scale of the forthcoming price increases. The people are being told what has made the rise in prices necessary and what economic consequences it will entail. Various suggestions for changes in prices are being publicly discussed and, together with the trade unions, the scale and methods of compensation are determined.

True, this democratic procedure has its specific difficulties. Having learned of the forthcoming price rises, people are rushing to the shops. The demand for goods is increasing, even causing hitches in supply. Restoring the balance takes some doing. But we prefer a temporary dislocation of organization of trade to the dislocation of the state.

The economic reform, painful for most family budgets, has not created an explosive situation. But this does not mean that the internal political situation has not been aggravated. In a survey of public opinion conducted immediately after the price increases, 80 per cent of adult Poles expressed discontent and even indignation at the government's decision. At the same time, however, 69 per cent of respondents said their discontent did not mean they did not accept the government's measures as economically inevitable. Forty-four per cent admitted that the price rises were necessary, while forty per cent declared, in spite of our explanations, that they could have been avoided.

It was, of course, hard to imagine that the people would welcome the price increases, and the government did not expect enthusiastic approval. Nevertheless, pessimism, which is unfavourable to the reforms, is making itself painfully felt. In January, after the forthcoming price rises were announced, only 13 per cent of the population expressed hopes of an improvement in living standards. Fifty-two per cent of those polled believed that, contrary to the government's promises to keep the level of incomes stable, their living standards would deteriorate in the current year. Eighty-nine per cent believed that the economic situation was bad. This opinion was confirmed by the rush of customers to the shops on the eve of the price increases.

As compared with December 1987, the index of confidence in the Sejm has dropped by 7 points, and in the government as the initiator of the price rises, by 8 points, with confidence expressed by 68 and 54 per cent of Poles, respectively. Judging from surveys carried out by the sociological laboratory at the Committee for Radio and Television, the index of confidence in the PUWP's social policy has also dropped markedly.

The scale of the changes

The price increases are merely part of the second phase of the radical economic reform. In its turn, the reform is part of the vast programme to restructure economic, political and social life in the country. Poles are showing great interest in the forthcoming elections to local councils. They will be held on a new basis, with voters having to choose one of several candidates for each seat. It has been decided to regard ballot papers in which the remaining candidates have not been crossed out as spoiled votes. Along with work collectives and public organizations, the right to nominate candidates to local councils has also been granted to general public meetings.

The implementation of the economic reform is also bringing changes for the better in public life. The following rule has been established: in the economy, what is not banned is permitted and, in principle, economic enterprise needs no permission. The number of orders issued from above has been reduced, and the number of factories where the manager is a ministerial appointee has been limited drastically. Out of several thousand plants, managers are now appointed from above at only 400. At all other plants they are elected by personnel.

Cooperatives are no longer, as previously, obliged to form an alliance. Shops and workshops numbering fewer than 50 employees will soon be freely leased to private citizens, and preparations are under way for the sale of bonds issued by factories to employees. Measures are being elaborated to help state-owned enterprises establish direct cooperation with foreign companies. About a dozen enterprises are expected to conclude similar agreements every month, and the process will continue over the next two years.

It is to be hoped that after the shock caused by the price rises has passed and family budgets have been adjusted to the new structure of incomes and expenditure, the large-scale economic changes and the process of democratization will help improve public feeling. On the whole, however, the reform is being implemented with great difficulty. But in Poland it requires perhaps greater effort than anywhere else.

Warsaw

Vietnamese Joan of Arc

Operation Trust ● Not by rice alone ● Dong and dollars ● Saigonpetro operates ● Across a sea of troubles to a Gold Star

From our special correspondent ALBERT PIN

A bronze statue of Joan of Arc holding a torch in her out-stretched hand... This antique table lamp was presented to Madame Thi by the French ambassador to Vietnam. A beautiful but ambiguous gift. Of course, I can only guess at what the ambassador was hinting at. But be that what may, the bronze statue of Joan of Arc is very much in place in the reception hall of the trust run by Nguyen Thi Thi.

When the French ambassador paid his visit to the director of the biggest trust not only in Ho Chi Minh City, but in all of Vietnam, he probably knew her remarkable life story. The daughter of a Communist who died under torture in a colonial prison, Thi Thi followed in her father's footsteps. At the age of 18 she joined the party. Together with her fellow countrymen and women, she shared the hardships of the long and courageous struggle for the freedom and independence of her country – against the French colonialists, the Japanese invaders and, finally, the Americans. Her husband and brother lost their lives in this struggle.

But I believe that it was not those years in the life of Madame Thi that prompted the French diplomat to compare her to Joan of Arc. Unfortunately, fairly recently, at the beginning of the 1980s, her life was again fraught with great difficulties. As she told me, the food trust she had founded was proclaimed a "capitalist institution" and had to withstand a virtual siege.

The police received orders to put an end to the "harmful" operations conducted by Thi Thi and surrounded the main premises of her enterprise. It's true things did not reach the stage of force being used. Nguyen Van Linh, at that time secretary of the city party committee, stood up in defence of the trust. So even the most influential advocates of its extermination were forced to beat a retreat...

So what is this trust which was almost crushed by the conservative bureaucratic-administrative machine? Its primary task is to supply the population of Ho Chi Minh City and its suburbs (that's four million 200,000 people!) with rice. A truly immense task, as rice is the staple food of the Vietnamese people. But the operations of the trust do not stop there. Let me explain.

Nguyen Thi Thi has been keeping the city supplied with food for more than ten years. The immensity of the job can be judged from the fact that 46,000 tons of rice are consumed monthly by the people of Ho Chi Minh City. In the first years after the liberation of South Vietnam, the provision of food was the job of the Ministry of Agriculture, which operated on a centralized bureaucratic system. The food trust set up in 1980 was organized on the entirely different principle of free enterprise.

There is no need to bring rice for the needs of Ho Chi Minh City from afar, since the Mekong Delta – the biggest rice-growing area – is right next door. But first the rice had to be acquired and then delivered to the city. But the local peasants, even if they had harvested a bumper crop, were disposed to hang on to it. There was little sense in selling it at the prices offered by the state, and moreover, the value of money was constantly falling, as the rate of inflation in Vietnam is very high. It would be a different story it the trust could have offered the peasant commodities he needed in exchange for his rice.

And so the trust took on another job, that of providing the peasants with manufactured goods in exchange for rice. A very creditable though far from easy task. But without such an exchange there was little hope of keeping the city supplied with food.

So what does the trust offer the peasants of the Mekong Delta? A great deal, ranging from packaged noodles (dropped into boiling water they provide a ready meal in three minutes) to solar energy generators (you can buy your own generator for nine tons of rice)...

And where does the trust acquire all this? From different sources. Some it produces itself, thanks to the efforts of Thi Thi and her colleagues, while others it buys abroad – it has extensive foreign ties.

Nguyen Thi Thi showed me samples of the food products produced by the trust: noodles, waffles, biscuits, pastries. They both looked and tasted very appetizing. Quite suitable for export. Indeed, the trust not only supplies the peasants of South Vietnam but also sells its produce abroad. For instance, the noodles are in high demand in Latin America, Africa and neighbouring Singapore. Nor is demand for them any less in Ho Chi Minh City itself. The trust sells 54 different items, which bring it a monthly income of 10,000 million Vietnamese dong* and 10 million U.S. dollars.

A tidy sum. But the financial aspect is only one side of it. No less, if not more important, is the social aspect. The food is supplied by 1,700 small, predominantly family, businesses with the simplest of equipment. Incidentally, the opponents of the trust regarded this network of family businesses as the main problem, if not a "threat" to the socialist system.

All in all, 45,000 people work in these businesses. The trust supplies them with raw materials and packaging. The people work hard, sparing no effort or time – and they are well recompensed by their earnings. They earn more than workers at state enterprises. That is all the more significant, since, unfortunately, tens of thousands of people living in Ho Chi Minh City, especially young people, are unable to find any work – even jobs that pay meagre wages. So far it has proved impossible to provide jobs for all able-bodied Vietnamese. If it were not for the trust with its numerous family businesses, the problem would naturally be even more acute.

Since the trust exports its produce, it is able to buy abroad through foreign trade organizations the commodities needed most by the peasants: mineral fertilizers, cement and other construction materials, as well as solar generators guaranteed to operate for at least ten years. With such goods to offer, the trust finds it much easier to buy rice in the rural areas...

Nguyen Thi Thi pressed a button, and on the map of the city and its environs numerous coloured lights went on. The 750 green ones showed where the rice is sold, and the 800 red ones – the shops

*10 billion dong eguals roughly 41.7 million rubles

where the trust sells its own output. Thi Thi explained that the trust warehouses have stocks of 200,000 tons of rice and other products. We also have, she said, 300 vans for delivery services. The plan for the purchase of rice is determined by the Ho Chi Minh City people's committee. The trust comes under the umbrella of Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

One more important thing. The trust makes a profit only from the processing of agricultural products and from the sale of its processed food. That is because it buys the rice from the peasants and then sells it to townspeople at exactly the same price. Nguyen Thi Thi believes this to be unjustified from the economic point of view, and she made this plain in an article in the local paper Saigon giai phong. In her opinion, the trust must pay its way fully and be run on a cost-accounting basis.

Each of the 1,700 small family businesses working for the food trust in Ho Minh City produce a wide variety of food products.

Photo from the trust's advertising booklet

Be that as it may, at least today the city with all the millions who inhabit it are reliably supplied with rice, and the trust headed by Thi Thi, which till comparatively recently was frowned upon, has won high praise. The expediency of setting up similar trusts enjoying production and economic independence in other parts of the country has been recognized. And the efforts of Nguyen Thi Thi have received well-deserved recognition: in 1984 she was awarded the Gold Star of Hero of Labour of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, while last year she was elected to the country's National Assembly. And only recently she received another prestigious appointment. She was made president of the board of the trade and economic bank in Ho Chi Minh City. The bank's job is to stimulate the activities of cooperatives, craftsmen and family businesses in the city.

The reader will, I hope, excuse me if at this point I interrupt my story about the trust and its director to quote from an interview given last year to the Italian paper L'Unitá by the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party Nguyen Van Linh. It has direct bearing on my story.

L'Unità. I often hear people in Vietnam say that, strange as it may seem, the standard of living in the country during the war was higher than it is now: in the North, thanks to the generous aid of the socialist countries, and in the South – thanks to U.S. support. How long will it take before people will be able to say: "We are better off now, although we get less aid than we did then"?

Nguyen Van Linh. That's true. At that time the North received aid from the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, while the Americans provided the South not only with weapons, but also with economic aid so that life in the South would be better than in the North. Goods in the South were cheaper than in the United States itself or in Japan. But during those years so many of our comrades lost their lives and so many bombs were dropped on us!

The Americans and their puppets had hoped to conquer us and return us to a regime based on the exploitation of our riches. However, they miscalculated. Naturally, American aid to the South was stopped, while the Soviet Union continues to help us, but not on the same scale. In order to live, our people have to work. They have no right to turn constantly to the U.S.S.R. for assistance. Our people are industrious, but their methods of work are not industrial, even in the industrial centres. We must change our methods of work. I cannot say when life will get better, for we have so many difficulties...

In an earlier article in the magazine (No. 7, 1988) I wrote of the changes taking place in Vietnam following the Sixth Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in December 1986, of the party's determination to implement radical changes and overhaul the entire state mechanism, way of thinking and style of work. There are a great many difficulties and problems. That is why the first achievements on the road to renewal are so precious, as is the positive experience of the trailblazers, to whose number Nguyen Thi Thi rightly belongs.

Her rare organizational ability, energy, courage and knowledge of many fields are truly remarkable. Even an experienced businessman would envy her tenacity and ability to think in broad terms.

Judge for yourself from a couple more examples of the operations carried out by her trust.

Northwest of Ho Chi Minh City, near the port of Saigon, a rice-husking factory is now at the assembly stage. It will be able to process 600 tons a day, with a staff of only 30. The factory will have its own electricity supply from a solar energy generator. All the equipment was purchased in Japan for 7 million dollars. There is nothing like this factory in all of Southeast Asia.

At the end of last year a big oil refinery – Saigonpetro – was commissioned. The equipment was bought in France and paid for with funds donated by Vietnamese emigrants living in that country. The money was returned to their relatives in Ho Chi Minh City in dong – but at a much higher rate of exchange than the official one. It took a mere seven months to assemble the plant and it will be able to refine 40,000 tons of oil a year. Again the staff is very small – only 18 people. The trust purchases the oil for its refinery from Vietsovpetro, the joint Vietnamese-Soviet company engaged in oil drilling on the Vung Tau continental shelf not far from Ho Chi Minh City. As well as petrol, Saigonpetro gets other by-products including gas from its refinery. Nguyen Thi Thi told me that she has plans to double the refinery's capacity. The money for purchasing the necessary equipment has already been provided by Vietnamese emigrants.

Another new project is a stockbreeding farm. It is being built with private foreign capital from the Federal Republic of Germany (incidentally, the law passed recently by the Vietnamese National Assembly on foreign investments has evoked keen interest in business circles in many countries – Singapore, Japan, France, Australia, India). The stockfarm project will use the most up-to-date technology in producing lean meat (there is also a purchaser for the fat in Japan where it will be reprocessed for other purposes). Nguyen Thi Thi would like to export meat to the Soviet Union. And in general she has not lost hope that our country will show interest in other commodities produced by her food trust as well. In the meantime courses have been oranized for the staff where they are taught Russian as well as English. There are financial incentives for such studies.

My story about this Vietnamese Joan of Arc is drawing to an end. Just a few more details. She is 66 years old, and few people would guess that this grey-haired mild-featured woman who looks like a schoolteacher is in reality a first-class business executive. I was surprised to learn that she had only had four years of schooling. But it made me realize that she must have spent her whole life learning what she could.

On the wall of her office behind her desk hangs a large photograph – Thi Thi standing with Ho Chi Minh. It was taken exactly 20 years ago, in March 1968. That was when the popular uprising began in the South. The South Vietnam National Liberation Front sent a delegation to Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh. Nguyen Thi Thi was on the delegation as one of the leaders of the women's patriotic movement. That greatly prized photograph is all she has to remind her of her only meeting with Ho Chi Minh.

I asked Nguyen Thi Thi for permission to photograph her against the background of that memorable photo. She agreed. But, unfortunately, either my camera or the film let me down. I only hope that another chance will present itself.

Ho Chi Minh City-Moscow

MILLIONS OF SOVIET CIVILIANS AND PRISONERS OF WAR WHO WERE FORCIBLY REMOVED TO GERMANY DURING THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR WERE EITHER KILLED BY THE NAZIS OR DIED AS A RESULT OF SLAVE LABOUR. TO THIS DAY THE FATE OF MANY OF THEM REMAINS UNKNOWN. IS THERE ANY HOPE THAT 43 YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE WAR THEIR FAMILIES WILL AT LAST LEARN WHERE THEY ARE BURIED?

Tribute to the war dead

In West Germany there exists a list of 325,612 Soviet prisoners of war and internees buried in the country's cemeteries.

Our F.R.G. correspondent Nikita Zholkver reports:

The total number of Soviet citizens buried on the territory of what is today the Federal Republic of Germany is, of course, much larger. And probably we shall never learn of the fate of all the Soviet citizens who were victims of nazi enslavement. But today we can already erase 325,612 names from the tragic list of "missing" persons.

Several years ago the West German government instructed the popular alliance for the maintenance of war cemeteries and graves to compile a single list containing information about all the Soviet citizens that could be found. An immense job was done. Russian names were found in the cemeteries of 2,847 West German towns, settlements and villages. But the Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent received lists from only two German states, Rhineland-Palatinate and Hessen. It was decided not to hand over the full list, which indicated not only the day of death, but also the date and place of birth, family status and next of kin. This was revealed by Pastor Hans-Günter Sanders of Bremen at a press conference in Bonn on the eve of his departure for the Soviet Union with a Church delegation.

"We feel ashamed for our government," the Pastor said. "Even today, 43 years after the end of the war whose aim was to exterminate or enslave the Soviet people it still refuses to hand over to the Soviet organizations concerned the lists of Soviet prisoners of war and people forcibly removed into slavery who are buried on West German territory."

"What explanation can you offer for the federal government's stand?"

"It is counting on receiving from the Soviet Union in exchange for its lists the names of Germans killed in Russia or who died there as prisoners," replied Pastor Sanders. "That is why the Foreign Ministry is putting pressure on the Popular Alliance and forbidding it to release its information. This disgraceful trade in names is inhuman and runs counter to the aim of achieving mutual understanading between our peoples. Besides, the situation in the U.S.S.R. is entirely different. Many of the German cemeteries were destroyed by the Wehrmacht forces themselves. And one can hardly count on the remaining ones being tended by the Soviet people..."

The lists compiled in Federal Germany could shed light on a great many things. For instance, they include the names of 34 Soviet prisoners who were shot by the nazis in March 1945, in Essen, when the local prison had to be "cleared." Also on the list are the names of babies born in concentration camps and then put to death in the course of inhuman experiments carried out by "medical experts." After all that the peoples of the two countries went through, how can anyone in Federal Germany still try to retain power if not over living Soviet people then over the dead? How can Russian graves be turned into a political bargaining chip?

Where are these lists? Bonn and Kassel give different answers to that question:

A spokesman for the Bonn Foreign Ministry, Jürgen Chrobog, whom our correspondent approached for information, rejected any accusations outright. The Ministry had no such lists and was not putting pressure on anyone.

The reply received from Kassel, where the Popular Alliance has its headquarters, was that they possessed such documents

and were prepared to exchange them for a list of German names.

"But surely it would be more humane simply to publish the lists?"

The voice on the telephone was adamant: the documents were confidential material for negotiations. "If the Soviet side agree to meet us halfway, we shall of course make everything we have available to it..."

A strange attitude more like sacrilegious bargaining than anything else. Bargaining with the victims of nazism as chips.

What does the Soviet Red Cross know about these lists? What about its relations with the German side? The chief of the research department of the Soviet Red Cross V. Fatyukhina, had this to say:

"Since 1957 the Red Cross societies of the two countries have been cooperating on the basis of an agreement between them to find people from their respective countries listed as missing. In 1969 the West German Red Cross handed over to us a list of more than 100,000 Soviet citizens who died in Germany during the second world war and are buried in cemeteries now on the territory of the Federal Republic.

"In the Soviet Union, there are five cemeteries where Wehrmacht POWs are buried. Since 1973 there has been such a cemetery in Lyublino, since 1976, in Krasnogorsk, and since 1982, in Kirsanovo, Tambov and Marshansk. Lists of buried German prisoners of war received from Soviet archive sources were handed over to the West German Red Cross in 1974, 1976 and 1982 respectively. These cemeteries are visited by representatives of the Federal German embassy in Moscow and relatives from West Germany. The Soviet Red Cross has received no other lists.

"In 1982 we did receive from Federal Germany lists of Soviet citizens buried in cemeteries in Rhineland-Palatinate and Hessen. We knew nothing of the existence of other lists with more than 325,000 names. We first learned of such lists from the magazine New Times..."

But is it only a matter of figures? From conversations with Soviet Red Cross representatives one has a different impression. Obtaining information about all the known graves of Soviet patriots abroad (and I underlilne patriots), who have been unjustly forgotten and included in the lists of "missing" persons is, of course, our sacred duty. But another aspect of this problem is that not once has a single group of relatives made the journey to the graves of their near ones, because for a long time it was believed that a person was not "taken prisoner" but "surrendered." And those who paid with suffering and their lives for the miscalculations of others were regarded as highly suspect.

Pastor Sanders brought his own lists to Moscow. As he explained to our correspondent Konstantin Isakov:

"We decided that should the federal government refuse to publish its lists before our delegation's departure for the Soviet Union - and the delegation consists of more than 100 pastors and members of Evangelical Church congregations - we would hand over lists compiled independently to Soviet churches.

"Regrettably, the Foreign Ministry gave no positive reply about handing over the lists to the Soviet side. Therefore we have brought with us and turned over to the representatives of the Orthodox Church, the Baptists' Union and the Soviet War Veterans Committee a list of almost 2,000 Soviet citizens buried in Osnabrück cemeteries. This is a symbolic gesture, although the list contains the names and surnames, troop unit numbers, dates of birth and death and nationality of the dead. We compiled it independently and it is only a small part of the list of more than 325 thousand names.

"We did not set ourselves the task of gathering anew information about all Soviet citizens buried in cemeteries in Federal Germany in order to pass it on to the Russian Church, by-passing official channels, and not simply because it would be a colossal job requiring a vast amount of time, but rather because it is a political issue.

"In West Germany there are many families that mourn their dead and want to know where they are buried. Two of my parents' brothers - that is my uncles - were killed during World War Two and our family has never succeeded in finding out what their fate was. However, business considerations should not be allowed to supercede humane considerations. The Federal Republic must not become a country to which feelings of mercy are alien."

Pastor Sanders also spoke of his personal motives for visiting the Soviet Union. Two months ago when he was looking through family papers he found a piece of paper with a text written in Russian, and recalled having heard about it in his childhood from his grandmother. The pastor's parents were Masons and under the nazi regime held anti-fascist views. On receiving the news that her sons had died, the grandmother fell seriously ill and needed someone to nurse her. That was how Marusya, a girl brought to Germany from the Ukraine, appeared in their house. Her sister Shura worked for a neighbouring family. One day Marusya wrote a note, just in case Red Army units should enter Osnabrück. After the rout of fascism the girl returned to her own country. What her further fate was, the Pastor's family never knew. It was pure chance that the Pastor came on the note.

"Dear Comrades!!! I beg you not to harm this family, if only because these people were very kind to us. I have lived here for 3 years. They were kind to me, as well as to prisoners and civilians. They helped in every way they could. So please don't touch them, because they can still help our comrades. I beg you to leave them alone. Better turn your attention to other rich idiots than these kind people. This note was written by a girl from the Kiev region who worked in this house. 13.7.43."

On the other side of the sheet of paper was the address: Kiev region, Pereyaslav, the name of the street unintelligible, the house number - 24, and the name - Maria Demyanenko, as well as her date of birth - 4. 12.26.

"When one reads and re-reads this document," the Pastor continued, "one feels the mercy and kindness of that soul and, most important of all, it proves that the Soviet and German people can and should live in peace and trust one another. If only I could meet that Ukrainian girl..."

The joy of a mother whose daughter was returned to her is truly boundless. As boundless as the happiness of a girl who got her freedom and returned to her home. But millions of other Soviet people suffered a different fate. Some were killed in battle with the enemy in their own country, others were forcibly taken away, tortured to death in concentration camps and burnt in the furnaces of crematoria... The conversation with Pastor Sanders inevitably touched on the responsibility of the Church for human fates.

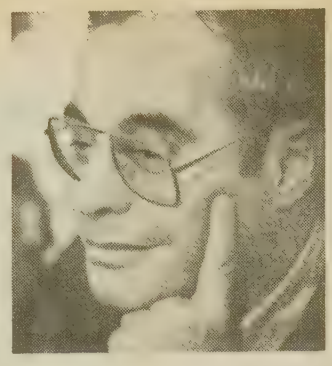
"In those dark years," the Pastor said, "our church did its utmost to din into the heads of the soldiers of the Wehrmacht the formula 'God is with us!' and prepare them for the march on the Soviet Union. The guilt for the past falls on the Church and religion. Today, however, responsibility for preserving peace rests on it.

"At meetings with representatives of the Orthodox Church and the Baptists' Union we felt the great love for humanity that is traditional in the Russian people. Our voice may be weak, but people in the Soviet Union should know that we will do everything in our power to ensure that an answer be found to the questions that sear people's hearts, no matter how bitter these answers may be."

The lists with more than 300 thousand names of Soviet citizens lie on the shelves of the popular alliance for the maintenance of war cemeteries. The noble initiative of Pastor Sanders and his friends has so far brought no results. But the Soviet people cannot remain indifferent to the sacred memory of their fellow countrymen.

The voice of conscience

The theatre studio U Nikitskykh Vorot headed by Mark Rozovsky has been engaged in an experiment for several years.



Mark Rozovsky.

One of the signs of renewal in the Soviet theatre is the mushrooming of new theatre studios.

There are many people who have something to tell others, but unfortunately they have not always had a chance to do so. And yet there were those who spoke out even yesterday, in defiance of many people and their ideas. They take much of the credit for the fact that all of us today are learning to be outspoken.

The modern studio movement was pioneered by the theatre studio called U Nikitskykh Vorot and its permanent director, Mark Rozovsky.

In 1982 a notice at the entrance of the Central Medical Workers' House of Culture invited volunteers to join the people's theatre. A lot of people turned up. There were factory workers, doctors, scientists, students and school leavers who had not yet made up their minds what to do. They were not actors, but then, the founders of the studio put a premium not on professional skill, but on human and civic attitudes.

Do these people feel strongly about something? Do they have a need to express themselves? Do they want to speak out on important and sensitive social issues? If the answer to all these questions was "yes," the rest could be acquired by training. This is what makes a theatre studio different from an ordinary theatre. First, like-thinking people get together under a leader. The leader is not somebody appointed from above, but a friend and of course a teacher.

This was how theatre companies were formed in the past that exploded the old stagnant traditions of the stage. Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Zavadsky and, more recently, Yefremov. The secret of their success was that they were able to detect the bidding of their time, things that were latent and demanding expression, and to get them across to audiences, inviting their involvement and sympathy. This was also true of Mark Rozovsky.

Strictly speaking, U Nikitskykh Vorot studio was not the beginning of the experiment. Its roots go back to the 1960s to which we find ourselves looking back more and more often, breathing in the air of the "thaw" and reflecting on the reasons why it was followed by another spell of cold. At that time Mark Rozovsky, who was studying journalism at Moscow University, set up a university studio called Our Home. That studio flourished for twelve years before the authorities shut it down. The young people for whom Our Home indeed provided a home and a meaning in life found themselves on the street.

Some succumbed, but not everyone. Some members of Our Home have now become household names in the Soviet theatre. They include Viktor Slavkin, Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Alexander Filippenko, Maxim Dunayevsky, Gennady Khazanov and Mark Rozovsky himself. He became a member of the Writers' Union, but he dreamed of reviving the studio. He still thought of himself primarily as a stage director. Now his dream has come true.

The first production of the Rozovsky studio was entitled "Doctor Chekhov." It was made in the true studio fashion, with all members working individually and together. The actors began by choosing stories by Chekhov, staging them and performing before their comrades. The best productions were selected. Then the director brought these pieces into a single whole in accordance with one basic idea. That idea was embodied by "the man with a hammer." He knocks at the doors of happy people and at their hearts to remind them that "woe lives next door and suffering - invisible, hidden behind the scenes of life. Remember this always."

They enjoyed total independence in their work. They searched, improvized and experimented. Gradually each actor discovered his identity and acquired stage presence. They developed creative principles and worked out a common attitude to life. A collective was born, a new theatre came into existence. The theatre had its ups and downs, there were arguments and quarrels. Some left. But others came to take their places. There were, and still are, difficulties. But the members of the studio feel that this is normal, that this is life which today knocks its little hammer to summon the best in each individual.

The studio's repertory today includes eight plays. Mark Rozovsky's "The Red Corner" sums up the studio's artistic credo most accurately. Created in 1983, it was soon banned. It was too outspoken and too honest for its time. "Such things cannot happen in our society," was the argument put forward by the officials who struck "The Red Corner" off the repertory. But how to combat negative aspects of life without exposing them? The authors were pained to see disunity and lack of cultural interests among contemporary people, the power of stereotypes, the habit of high-sounding rhetoric concealing a vacuum. This was the situation, and this is what we have now declared war on. The play's message is to pay attention to man, learn to discern beauty in what may look far from beautiful and to acquire tolerance and broad-mindedness with regard to the individual.

The same message informs the studio's staging of literary classics. "Two Creatures in Infinity" is loosely based on Dostoyevsky's novels "The Possessed" and "Crime and Punishment." The struggle between the base and the lofty, faith and faithlessness, is a timeless and ever-relevant subject. But the director draws attention to another problem present in Dostoyevsky's novels: the relationship between goals and means. The director feels that this problem is particularly acute in the contemporary world. If we look at terrorism today, says Rozovsky, we find that Dostoyevsky predicted and understood it. His idea that universal happiness is worthless if it is achieved at the expense of the happiness of a single child is extremely important today. Rozovsky recalls the shock he experienced when he discovered an almost word-for-word coincidence between the slogan of the Italian Red Brigades ("Everything now") and the words of Raskolnikov as he prepares to commit his crime. When asked by the charwoman, "You want to get hold of all the capital at once?" he replies firmly: "Yes, all the capital." And he goes on to commit a murder.

Permissiveness is disastrous, it robs man of his basic humanity. Permissiveness is a bloodless, but perhaps the most hideous kind of murder. To reveal and nurture the human spirit, to awaken kindness and an ability to feel for others - this is the purpose of all the studio's productions. Some of these plays hold up a mirror to the times (for example, "The Red Corner"). Others speak of things that are missing from our lives: the production of "Poor Liza" based on a story by Nikolai Karamzin is naively kind and sentimental.

The company are now rehearsing "Gambrinus" based on Alexander Kuprin's story. As so often before, an old story raises problems that have a contemporary relevance. A Jewish musician, Sashka, sings his ditties in a tavern in

a southern port city. Among his listeners are Russians, Greeks, Italians, Jews, Ukrainians, Negroes. Listening to his singing and his violin, they all have the same thoughts and feelings; they cry and laugh together. The theme of internationalism is worth raising again and again, for glasnost has brought out not only the best in each of us, but also what is alien to us - attempts to separate people by speculating on the sacred notion of memory. All this can only be overcome by kindness. This is the conviction of the studio's artists.

The message of kindness runs through all the studio's plays. The theme runs through Mark Rozovsky's play based on the works of Franz Kafka, which is shortly to be produced. It exlores the relationship between the artist and his environment, upholds the artist's right to his individuality, to inner freedom. It calls on the people around him to understand and forgive. This is also the message of Erland Josephson's play "Summer Night. Sweden." The name of this author is known in this country because Josephson appeared as an actor in Andrei Tarkovsky's two last films - "Nostalgia" and "Sacrifice." The prototype of the main character in the play - a Russian director - was Tarkovsky himself. The theme of the Motherland, the tragedy of a Russian artist separated from his country by force of circumstance, the search for points of contact with the representatives of other countries, and for mutual understanding - this will form the content of the play.

For all their depth and psychological flair, the plays of the studio U Nikitskykh Vorot are completely free of didacticism. They vary greatly in form: some are "subdued," chamber pieces, some are vivid musical spectaculars. As, for example, the now famous play "The Story of a Horse" (after Leo Tolstoy's story "Kholstomer"). It has now been staged at the National Theatre in London, on Broadway in the U.S., in Israel, Spain, France, Denmark, Finland - and this is only the beginning of the list. Mark Rozovsky attributes interest in this play to interest in Tolstoy's philosophy: his hatred of private property, luxury, of life without moral and physical effort - all this challenges today's consumer society. The play has the unusual format of a "Russian musical," exotic, dazzling, innovative, a blend of psychology and spectacle.

As from last year, the studio has switched to a new mode of operation, which involves self-management and self-financing. What does the studio stand to gain from this? To begin with, it will enjoy greater independence, it will be free of petty tutelage on the part of bureaucrats, and it will be able to stand on its own feet financially. Two halls are being refurbished (previously the studio had no premises of its own), actors are now getting decent salaries and have even donated money to the fund to help the victims of the Chernobyl power plant disaster and the Children's Fund. Some officials frown at the comparatively high salaries the actors are now getting and reproach them with commercialism. It is true that the members of the studio work tough schedules, and almost all of them combine several stage jobs. But was there an alternative? They started from scratch.

On the other hand, the company cannot afford to be insolvent. If it is unable to pay salaries on time, the whole experiment of self-financing will collapse. So, the company has to struggle to keep above water. Let us hope that these difficulties are temporary and will gradually be overcome.

It is our conviction that theatre, like any branch of the arts, must reflect its own times, even if it speaks about eternal questions. But the very story of a theatre, a creative organism, can tell us much about the times we live in. The path of Rozovsky's studio - from being proscribed to its present soaring popularity - is a proof of the changes taking place in this country.

Its best plays knock at our hearts with Chekhov's little hammer.

TATIANA CHERNOVA

U.S.S.R.-INDIA

Satellite orbited under contract

The U.S.S.R.'s first commercial launching of a foreign artificial earth satellite has been carried out successfully. The Soviet carrier rocket Vostok lifted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome to put the Indian-made IRS-1A satellite into orbit.

The record of Soviet-Indian cooperation in space research goes back many years and features the flight of the mixed crew comprising Yuri Malyshev, Gennady Strekalov and Rakesh Sharma, and the three successful launchings from Kapustin Yar cosmodrome in the U.S.S.R. between 1975 and 1981 of the Aryabhata, Bhaskara-1 and Bhaskara-2 artificial earth satellites, which carried out a vast programme of astrophysical and ecological observations. In the opinion of Professor U.R. Rao, director of the Indian Space Research Organization, the assessment of natural resources from orbit is particularly important to his country. For instance, the practical use of making a snow map of the Himalayas can be illustrated by the fact that flooding does the country 200 million dollars worth of damage a year. Consequently, there is an acute need for space forecasts.

The new satellite, which is of exclusively Indian manufacture, is intended for the study of the earth's natural resources. The IRS-1A is equipped with the latest optical scanning system, and its three still cameras, sensitive to both visible and near-IR light, have between them a field of vision 150 km across.

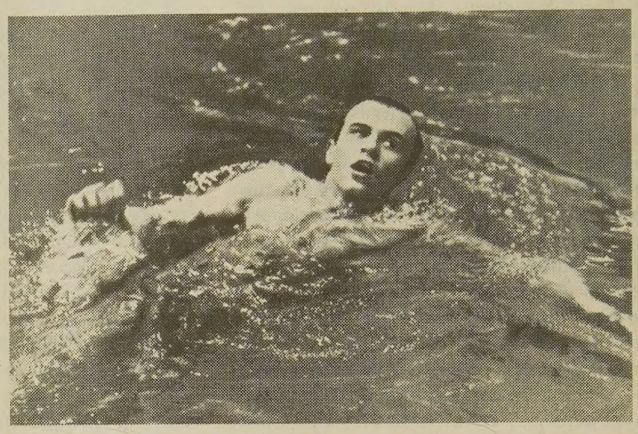
Professor Rao says that the satellite, which is to remain in orbit for three years, will photograph the territories of a number of developing Asian and African countries. Experts from 18 countries have been trained to decipher information coming in from orbit. Professor Rao stressed that problems of vital importance to the entire region include finding subterranean water sources, holding back the desert, and preserving tropical forests.

Who will control this orbital mission? The Soviet side will see the satellite through the initial 90 days from the Medvezhyi Ozyora tracking station near Moscow. After post-launching problems, if any, have been dealt with, control will be taken over by the Indian mission control centre in Bangalore, the scientific capital of India. Incoming data will be picked up and processed by the centre in Hyderabad. The satellite will work to a tight schedule. The camera lenses "grabbed" the earth within 24 hours of lift-off, in the satellite's eleventh loop, after the solar-cell panels had opened out and the satellite had steadied itself. The project is being carried out under a contract signed by the all-union self-supporting foreign trade organization Licenzintorg and the Indian space research organization. The U.S.S.R. Glavkosmos central administration of space technology development and use for national economy and science offers any country the chance to have its satellites launched from Soviet cosmodromes. Our Vostok carrier rockets are extremely reliable - they have made it in 89 cases out of 90 to date.

SERGEI LESKOV

Olympic hopeful

At the U.S.S.R.-G.D.R. swimming event, Igor Polyansky of Novosibirsk set a new world record. The European medley record has been beaten.



Speed-swimmer Igor Polyansky.

TASS photo

Igor is no newcomer as a world record holder in swimming. Experts and fans will remember that twice, in 1985 and 1986, he came first in the 200 metres backstroke and although latterly he seemed to be on the sidelines, he has still always been seen as a hopeful claimant for the gold in this event at the coming summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea. This view has been endorsed by his two spectacular wins at the U.S.S.R.-G.D.R. contest at Tallinn's Kalev pool in mid-March, where he twice beat the world 100-metre record, reducing the time to 55.16 seconds.

The contest gave the G.D.R. swimmers an edge of 208 to 174 points, with the Soviet male team scoring 115 to 76 points, and the G.D.R. girls beating the Soviet side with 132 to 59 points.

But back to Igor's display. It had been thought that at this event, held traditionally at the start of the season, no records would be broken. In every Olympic year all athletes prepare for the paramount events, trying to get into top form by the time the Games begin. In short, the experts thought that the swimmers would merely take stock of their rivals' and their own powers, while their coaches drew the necessary conclusions, and then build up their potential for the Olympic Games. However, the event defied all forecasts.

Though I am not given to drawing parallels, I think it would be quite appropriate to compare the Tallinn results to the pre-Olympic skating results of Calgary, which produced a startling display of records. The ideal conditions for competition provided by the new indoor rink enabled skaters to jettison all notions of current potential. However, this by no means is the whole explanation for the lavish crop of records. Note that both athletes and their coaches are trying to work out new training methods and take better advantage of human physical potential. Now we see swimmers, including those from the Soviet Union, emulating the skaters. Anticipating developments, I think that at the Summer Olympics swimmers will set new world records; indeed, it is quite likely that several of them may break old records in the final heats.

Meanwhile in Tallinn, capital of the Estonian Republic, Igor startled Soviet fans with an unusual initial lap. The Japanese were the first to employ the novel technique in which the swimmer covers part of the distance under the water. Next the Americans followed suit. This technique gives something of an advantage, and it is only rational to use it even if it was initiated by others. We might recall in this connection, incidentally, how start and turn around techniques have modified over the years and what advantages have been derived therefrom.

Experts say Igor has improved the new start technique to perfection. During the first 25-metre lap, the spectators could guess where he was only from the blurred outline of his body. When he finally surfaced, he proved to be at least a full body-length ahead. As for the entire distance, he has always been able to build up speed, and, as a result, sliced two hundredths of a second off U.S. swimmer Rick Carey's world record.

Whereas the initial attempt to secure a world record did not seem to be on the cards, the second was definitely programmed. On the final day of the meet, Igor was not under starter's orders for the 200 metres, suggesting that he again sought to break the world record in the 4x100 metres medley, in which he takes the first lap. He was successful, slicing another hundredth of a second off the old record. There was more to come, with his team mates Dmitry Volkov, Vadim Yaroshchuk and Gennady Prigoda attacking the European record and breaking it with a time of 3 minutes 40.66 seconds.

Yet might it not be too early for Igor to demonstrate peak form? Does this not involve the risk of his not being able to sustain this form until the Olympics?

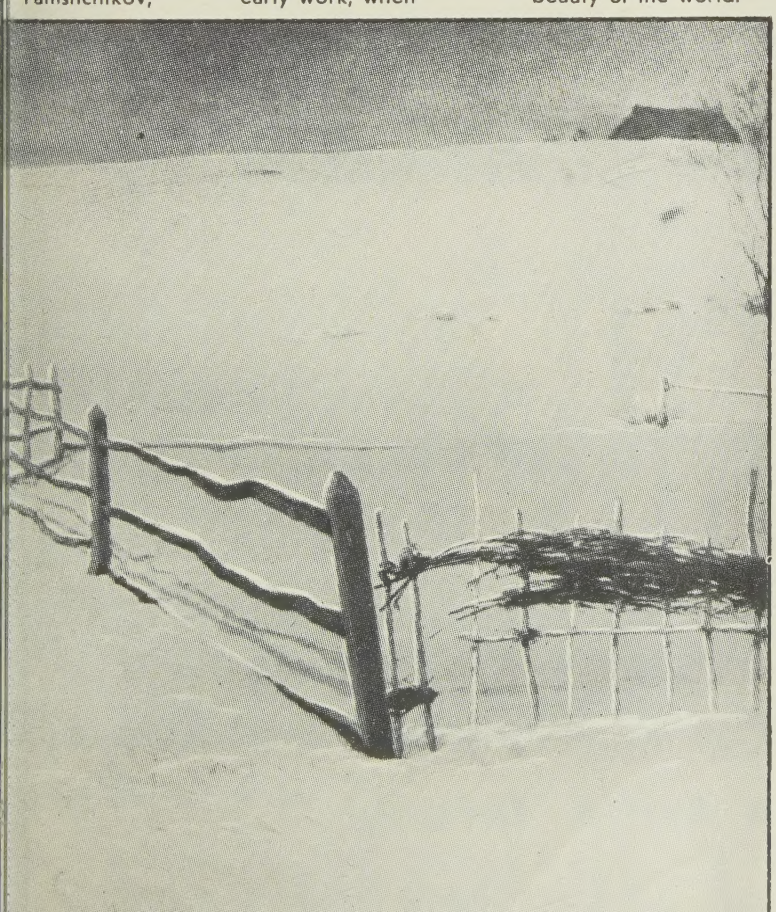
Igor himself says that this is not so, and that at the Olympics he will definitely break more records. He is now 21, and this age, he believes, and scientists maintain, is a swimmer's prime.

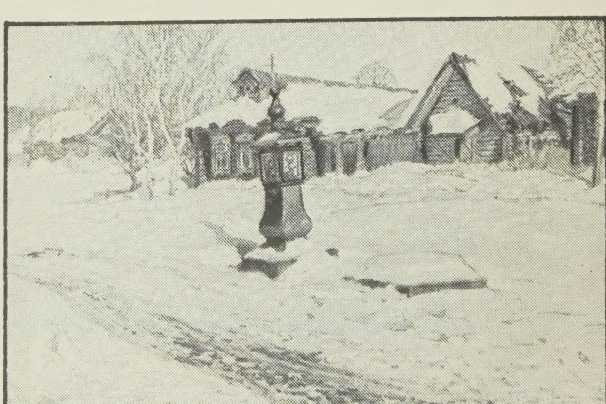
I have had the good fortune to see Igor at notable competitions, including the Goodwill Games, where he came first. He is undoubtedly capable of coping thoroughly, consistently and rationally with the complicated training involved in preparing for the main event. I have every hope that in collaboration with coach Vladimir Semushev he will work out his own way to a spectacular Olympic win.

Anatoly Tchaikovsky

urrecting a forgotten name

ecently the work olai Meshcherin –1916) was wn even cialists, although evidence contemporaries, rk was rkable bution Russian art beginning century. ng his paintings ot easy. ding to art critic Yamshchikov, it took fifteen years to persuade the directors of the Artists' Union of the Russian Federation to organize an exhibition. But today all that is in the past. An exhibition has been held and a forgotten name has been revived. Meshcherin's painting covers a wide range of styles. After his early work, when he was already an accomplished painter, he abandoned impressionism and turned to the traditions of the school of Levitan. But later he began to work in an original style, uniquely his own, based on the principle of pointillisme. Throughout his life he sought new forms through which to reflect the extraordinary beauty of the world.





Moonlit Night. Village 1899. ● The end of winter. Portrait of A. I. Petrova with her daughter, 1893. ● Clea day (in March) 1908.

BLUES– CONFIDENCE AND CHARM

The Novaya Zarya factory

ИНДЕКС 70622 НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫ